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FEATURE STORY

THE INNER WHEEL

"THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY," By ROBERT CARLTON BROWN, IN OUR NEXT

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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The Inner Wheel

A FEMALE DETECTIVE STORY

By OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

CHAPTER ONE

"MR. NOLAN to see you, sir."

Duncan answered curtly, without raising his eyes from the mass of work which lay on the desk before him.

"Show him in."

The office-boy retired softly, closing the big door with the utmost care. A few seconds later it opened to admit Andrew Nolan, general manager of the railroad system of which John Duncan was president. The eyes of the two men met; Nolan was smiling easily, and the lines about Duncan's lips—deep lines—became deeper.

"Well?" he snapped.

Nolan seated himself at the opposite side of the desk, selected a perfecto from a box which lay invitingly open, and puffed in luxurious silence for a few seconds.

"Say it!" rumbled Duncan. "When you make that theatric show of silence I know that you've come on unpleasant business. Is it something about the strike?"

"Partly."

"What about it?"

"Merely that I've been keeping my finger on the pulse of the public via the medium of *The Ledger*, and I know that sentiment is gradually turning away from the Cateret, Atlantic & Western. The people, in short, are rallying to the cause of the strikers. They probably are absorbing some truths about the rottenness of the system."

"Bah! You prattle like a Socialist. Have the strike-leaders changed their demands?"

"No; I am afraid they won't. The shopmen and yardmen are out now, and if the sentiment gets much stronger the trainmen may join them. They're asking a ten per cent. increase and work cut down to nine hours per day.

They're strong, and I'm afraid if we don't meet their demands they'll be raised. If the trainmen join them, we'll have to give in."

"What about our army of strike-breakers?"

"They didn't like the looks of the strike committee which waited on them, and only a few of them went to work."

"Have they been molested?"

"No-o-o, not exactly; but——"

"I see; they've received intimations."

"Precisely; the question is, what are we going to do about it. The turn of the public sentiment is reacting very unpleasantly on the strikers, and I'm afraid they'll become militant; and then"—Duncan's square jaw snapped tightly—"by God, we'll stop them. If they resort to lawlessness——"

"Humph! And now the matter I really came to discuss with you." Nolan drew from an inner pocket a sheaf of papers.

"What are those?"

"Carefully gathered reports on the various places in this and the Edgewater divisions which need new trackage."

"Don't talk rot!"

Nolan's eyes grew steely.

"Listen to me. Whether you heed what I am going to say or whether you don't, I'm going to have the selfish satisfaction of knowing that I have made a full report. In the first place, in both of these divisions we need new rails—have needed them for a long time; in addition to that, our cross-ties are rotten and we have had to augment our repair crews, spikes have been pulling out. Our engineers are under orders to run behind schedule as far as Carns Crossing, which is at the other end of the Edgewater division, and this is tying up everything. Our fast and local freights are making poor time, and our despatchers are at their wits' end keeping tab on the trains.

"At Melton, Varnville, Horseshoe Cut, Franklin, Bennets and Chilton conditions are rotten, and at all of those places are dangerous curves. I know you're going to say that the men behind the system will not pay out any such tremendous sum as is needed, because they must collect their dividends, must take the profits and put them into their own pockets instead of putting them in improvements; but I'm telling you, Duncan, that something has to be done, and done quickly, if we are to avoid wrecks and damage suits. The public is entitled to some consideration, some reasonable assurance of safety. You are a big stockholder; your voice in favor of such improvements will carry moral and practical power. Why don't you?"

"Because"—Duncan moistened his lips—"I'm not such a tremendous stockholder as you think, and because this road must pay dividends—big dividends. It isn't a case that I don't realize the truth of what you say, but we've run on as long as we have without any trouble, and there's no reason why we have to rush into the making of improvements now, especially when this strike has lessened our efficiency and we're at much greater expense than ordinarily. I don't see why"—wearily—"people think that a public service corporation should be operated without profit. Under government control, with a score of commissions and organizations dictating to us, the last persons in the world who are considered are the men who have their money tied up in the system. I, for one, would be a pauper were it not for my C., A. & W. holdings. My all is tied up here, and I can appreciate the viewpoint of the men who demand that the profits go into their pockets, instead of into an endless chain of improvements. If you were in my shoes you would understand."

"I understand," retorted Nolan dryly, "that the improvements must be made. It would take this dividend, which the company is about to declare; but it would increase the size of the next."

"And meanwhile——"

A tap on the door, and a young man—broad-shouldered, competent—breezed into the room.

"Father!" he started, then stopped short on seeing the visitor. He crossed the room and extended his hand. "Howdy, Mr. Nolan. And what brings you here at this time of day?"

"Trying to drum some horse-sense into your father's cranium. I've told him——" He paused and glanced at Duncan.

"Go ahead," smiled the iron-gray president proudly; "I'm trying to educate my son to the ins and outs of the business, and I'm curious to see what he thinks."

The young man listened attentively, and after Nolan had finished, he stood for a long time in silence, pondering.

"I'm afraid, father," he said quietly, "that I agree with Mr. Nolan. This is a public service corporation, operated under the usual government control. The law has decreed that it owes a duty to the public, and that duty has to be performed. Making the improvements now would merely be a deferring of dividends."

John Duncan shook his head wearily:

"Don Quixote, Alan; the impetuosity of youth. When you've rubbed fists and facts, instead of fads and fancies, with the world for as many years as I have, you will begin to see that almost anything is fair in big business. The public regards the mysterious men behind railroads as human ghouls; they're scrapping us at every turn. It reminds me of the man who cut off his nose to spite his face. But in this case they've got to wait; we can't make the improvements now. It would eat our dividends, and the stockholders wouldn't stand for that. I can't lay out money in that way; the directors must do it, and they won't."

Again the boy entered the room.

"Mr. Alvin Hemingway to see you, sir," he announced. Then covertly he smiled at Alan. "And Miss Katherine Hemingway."

Alvin Hemingway—slender, well-groomed, highly intellectual of appearance—entered the room abruptly, and behind him came his daughter, a girl with her father's strength of character delineated in her face and softened by lines of intense femininity. She shook hands with the other men in the room, and if her hand remained in Alan's a trifle longer than convention demands, the others appeared not to notice.

"More unpleasantness," said Duncan resignedly; "I suppose you've come to tell me that there's nothing doing in the matter of the Johnson settlement."

"Exactly; I've looked into the matter carefully and I find that the road is liable. I offered the administrator, through his attorney, a thousand dollars, but he declined with smiles. You see, Johnson was a yardman, and was therefore a licensee. He was not a trespasser, and we are held to a lock-out. Of course, we have a bare chance in court, but I'm afraid that a ten-thousand-dollar verdict is the least that we can expect."

"And in settlement?"

"I believe I can buy them off for five thousand dollars cash and get a release in full. He's talking eight thousand, but on a press he'll come down to five."

"And our chances in court?"

"Oh, I'll plead assumption of risk and contributory negligence, but I don't think we have a chance of getting by with it. The judges are very chary nowadays of keeping cases from the jury, and in this case I firmly believe

that we're liable; and with a widow and two children, and of the better class of working people, I wouldn't be surprised to see the verdict as high as fifteen or twenty thousand dollars."

"And the minimum?"

"Is, I believe, five thousand dollars."

"Sorry; it's impossible. We'll have to run our chances. Look over their complaint when they serve it; demur it; delay proceedings as long as you can. I just simply cannot spend any money now."

"Has it ever occurred to you," interrupted Nolan softly, "that it might be a piece of good business policy to settle this case. Johnson was one of the strike movement leaders, and our failure to settle, when even to a lay mind our liability is patent, might militate against us in influencing public sentiment and retroactively inflaming the strikers to militancy."

"My hands are tied," snapped Duncan, "and besides, I wouldn't. The railroads are bilked all the time. I'd rather take my chances in court, and maybe, if they see that we are going to fight—and they know that we'll delay proceedings as long as possible—they'll be willing to compromise for something like two thousand five hundred dollars."

"It does seem a shame," broke in Alan, "to take advantage of the fact that the woman is a widow and that the children are dependent, to rob them of the money to which they are entitled."

"Rob is a strong word, son," said Duncan mildly.

"Maybe, and maybe not. If she were able to take care of herself, the time she received the money would make no difference, and the length of the court proceedings would not materially affect her; but in this case we are deliberately taking advantage of the fact that she must have the money, and we're trying to gouge half from the five thousand dollars to which our own counsel says she is due. It isn't honest, morally."

"These are not the days of morals, son; they are the days of business."

"Don't argue, Alan," urged the girl; "you're father is as set on one side of the question as you are on the other. It is one subject on which you will never agree."

"And you?"

"Delighted that your stand is as it is. I wouldn't have you feel any other way; and yet your father has the courage of his convictions. He is the product of an era, a system, and a mental revolution. You spring from a different generation at a different time; you have received your business education under different circumstances, and you cannot understand. I wouldn't have any friend of mine feel other than you do."

The phone rang loudly. Duncan, senior, irritably lifted the receiver to his ear.

"Well?"

His face grew suddenly pale.

"What's that, McTear? What? God!"

The others had risen, frightened by the ashen face and sweat-beaded forehead of the usually self-controlled president.

"Yes; right off." The phone clicked on the hook.

"What—what is it?"

Duncan passed his hands wearily across his eyes.

"Number 39 wrecked at Horseshoe Cut; fourteen persons killed and thirty-three injured!"

CHAPTER TWO

FOR fully a minute the five people stared at each other in mute horror. Then John Duncan, suddenly galvanized into the man of immediate action, turned sharply.

"Alan, you and Katherine leave the room," he snapped. "Wait in the outer office."

"But, father."

"Don't discuss it! Go, and keep your mouth shut about what you have just heard."

Alone, he faced Hemingway and Nolan.

"Well?"

Nolan's face twitched, and he moistened his lips.

"Well," he croaked, "I told you so."

"Discuss the present; that's all past. We didn't, and here's the wreck. Hemingway, what will it mean?"

"What are the circumstances?"

Duncan rang up the despatcher and talked earnestly for several minutes. Then he snapped out the story in characteristic, monosyllabic sentences:

"Rotten cross-ties, poor rails, spikes pulled out, rails spread; Thirty-nine first train along, then this. We're liable, aren't we, Hemingway?"

"Certainly," answered the lawyer.

"Frederick Palmer, his wife, Thomas G. Carroll of Edgewater and several other prominent men among the killed. Damages will play hob with us, unless——" He paused suddenly, and something in the set expression of his face kept the others silent. The big clock in the corner ticked slowly, ponderously. Hemingway scraped his feet on the floor and Nolan started nervously, then spat viciously.

"Unless?" prompted Nolan.

Duncan stared belligerently at his general manager.

"Unless the strikers wrecked that train for the purpose of injuring the railroad."

Hemingway gazed blankly out of the window at the gaunt silhouette of roofs, which stretched away and were lost in the nebulous background of dirty smoke. Nolan gazed fixedly into the steel-gray eyes of his superior, unbelief written largely on his face.

"But they didn't," he articulated with difficulty. "We know they didn't."

"We don't know!" snapped Duncan; "they may have. And can we afford to have the public sentiment turned against us in the flood tide by such a thing as this? This is a psychological moment; this wreck and the turning of sentiment in favor of the strikers will come pretty close to putting the road in a rotten financial condition. If the strikers were to blame, now—if the blame could be fixed on them, if one of their leaders was arrested, even though we let him go later, and public sentiment was so diverted against them for the time being—the C., A. & W. would stand some chance of coming out on the right side. The thing as it stands is impossible."

"But would you arrest an innocent man?"

"Bah! You prattle like a missionary worker. What is one man more or less where millions are concerned? Besides, the man could be proved innocent and the object would have been gained. I'm running this road, see, and I'm running it for the interests of the stockholders, not for the public. This chance seems Heaven-sent. The man whom we have arrested will only suffer a short jail term, and he'll never be brought to trial. Our special agent will discover that he has made a mistake and apprehended the wrong man, and then everything will be cleared up; there will have been a general revulsion of feeling and the strike will be over."

"It's preposterous!"

"Piffle! Stop canting. In the first place, it's necessary; in the second place, it's practicable."

"How?"

"Hemingway stands aces high with Coroner Mason. Mason's a crook to boot; tickle his palm a little bit and he'll bring in a verdict which will by indirection fasten the crime on the machinations of the strikers, and which

will at least absolve the railroad from moral, although not legal, liability."

"I see. And then?"

"We arrest one of the strike leaders on the testimony of one of our own special agents. He is put in jail and charged with train-wrecking. Later on, when the whole rotten mess shall have simmered down, we'll discover that Mr. Victim is innocent, and just to show that even corporations have souls"—he smiled sardonically—"we'll have the man released and we'll re-employ him at a big increase of salary—profuse, public apologies and all that stuff."

Hemingway arose quietly; something in his manner held the attention of the other men. For the minute he looked the commander, the superior.

"And I understand," he remarked dryly, "that I am in on this?"

"Certainly."

"I am to fix the coroner?"

"Of course; you virtually put him in office, and you have unlimited power over him. You can unmake him with the turn of a wrist, and he stands in deep and abiding fear of you."

"And I am to do the stool-pigeon's work in shifting the blame for this wreck from where it belongs to the shoulders of an innocent man—an innocent, conscientious body of men?"

"You talk like a child."

"Child!" Hemingway's voice was suddenly thunderous. He strode across the room in two steps and towered magnificently over the smaller, broader Duncan. "Child, is it? I'm talking like a man, do you understand. Listen here, Duncan; I get a big salary from your dirty railroad, but never in the course of my employment has there been a time when I haven't earned every cent of it, and I'll admit that there have been times when I've done things of which I wouldn't like to tell Katherine; but this time I balk."

Duncan had risen, his square jaw hard, his fists clenched.

"Go on," he mouthed grimly.

"I'm going on; I've listened to you two——" He paused.

"Say it!"

"You two crooks planning the most outrageous thing I've ever run across, and hiding behind the excuse of 'Business.' Maybe that's business, but if it is, then thank God I'm not a business man. I refuse!"

"You realize what it means?"

Hemingway calmed himself with an effort; his iron-gray hair fairly bristled, and his face worked with the strength of the passion under which he labored.

"What?"

"Your retainer with us; your income stopped just like that!" Duncan snapped his fingers. "Can you afford it?"

Hemingway smiled. "And you think to threaten me, to browbeat me into your dirty work by an intimation that I'll be pauperized? I was under the impression that you thought more of me than that."

"I'll make you do what I want!"

Hemingway drew a deep breath. He walked to the window and walked back again. Once more he faced Duncan, and when he spoke his voice was quiet, dignified, but trembling with repressed anger.

"You've threatened," he said; "now I'll make a move. I'm done with the railroad from this minute; but"—his voice was fraught with indomitable intent—"if you carry out this infamous scheme of yours, the very second you do, then I will go before the Grand Jury, of my own volition, and repeat every word of the conversation which has occurred here to-day!"

Nolan had risen. Hemingway and Duncan gripped the heavy golden oak table and stared into each other's eyes.

Duncan spoke. "You mean that?"

"As God is my judge."

"Then," replied Duncan calmly, "I'll play the game my way. No man has thwarted me yet, and, by God! no man will. Go! What follows?"

"Don't threaten!" snapped Hemingway harshly. "I don't like it." Very quietly he left.

The next morning, at five minutes after two o'clock, Alvin Hemingway's body was found in his study with a bullet through the heart, and on the floor, as though it had dropped from his hand, a revolver from which one bullet had been discharged.

CHAPTER THREE

GEORGE MONTGOMERY was chief of police in Cateret by virtue of Alvin Hemingway's efforts in his behalf, and so it was that less than fifteen minutes after he received a phone message, telling him of Hemingway's death, his big roadster chugged to a panting stop in front of the big house, which loomed up ghost-like in the night, its front windows streaming light.

Montgomery was a big man, physically and mentally, and an unusually capable one. He went up the steps of the veranda two at a time, and was greeted at the top by Katherine—slender, deadly white, dry-eyed.

"Your father?"

"Dead," she answered hoarsely, "in his study!"

The chief put his arm protectingly about her shoulder and she shuddered convulsively.

"Tell me about it," he prompted kindly.

"Father was in his study; he was worried; I'll explain that later. He is in the habit of sitting there without a light. I was asleep. I heard a shot—I think it was two; mother insists that only one was fired. I ran down-stairs; I fell. When I switched on the lights in the study I found his body—his body."

"Go on, please."

"All huddled up in the morris-chair; on the floor in front of him lay the revolver. At first I thought it was suicide; but the papers belonging on his desk were scattered all over the floor, and it looks as though some of them might be gone."

"Had your father been worried lately?"

"Only since this afternoon."

"Why?"

"Listen; I'll tell you, and I want your help. I think John Duncan is behind this murder."

"What?"

"I do; father visited him to-day and they had a violent discussion of which father told me." Briefly she related to the officer the facts as her father had told them to her on their return home. "And," she finished, "father meant to make public his knowledge, and Duncan knew it. What then would be more natural than this?"

"But surely you don't think——"

"Yes, I do; men of his stamp stop at nothing. He remarked to-day that a man more or less counted as naught where millions were involved. That's why I've scouted the idea of suicide. If he'd been coward enough for that, he would have been coward enough to do as Duncan wanted. Besides, I'll swear I heard two shots fired."

"Only one was fired from his gun, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then——"

"But what about the papers and the disorderly condition of the room?"

"Let me inspect it; keep every one else out until I have finished. I wish to handle this case personally. Your father and I were friends. There, now"—as the shoulders of the girl shook—"don't cry. Be the little woman that

you are. If your father was murdered we want to bring the culprit and the men behind—for it is absurd to presume that Duncan himself committed the crime—to justice. Wait here until I return."

Fifteen minutes later Montgomery rejoined the girl. His face was grim, his jaw set.

"I agree with your theory," he said quietly; "but I'm puzzled. It seems to me that some papers have been taken. Of course, I don't know what he had, or whether anything really is gone; but there is one package of papers which has been ripped open and scattered all over the floor. But the lower third of the package is as it was. It looks to me as though the marauder was searching for some special thing, and that, having found it, he was content to make his escape through the window there."

"And?"

"That's what puzzles me. If your theory is absolutely correct, and I'll admit that it sounds probable and logical, although almost unbelievable, how could robbery have been the object? Of course," he smiled deprecatingly, "I may be wrong."

"No," the girl replied seriously; "I noticed that pile of papers, too, and the same thing struck me."

"Do you know what sort of papers they were?"

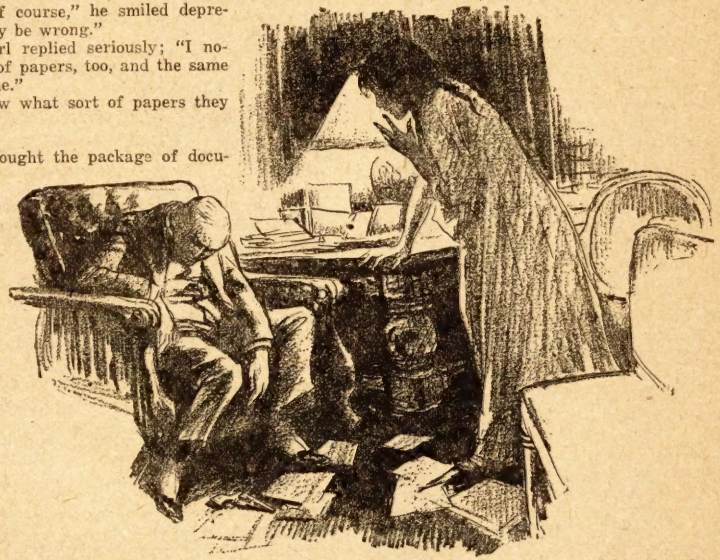
"Get them."

The chief brought the package of documents, and the girl ran over them very hurriedly.

"Evidence against those who have been suspected of doing dirty work against the railroad."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when a man is suspected of something which is not as it should be, every effort is immediately made to find out all about it. Father then compiles the result of his search and files it away He usually keeps all this sort of thing at his office, unless he happens to be working on it at the time. But why that, or any of it, should have been stolen?"



"Father sat, all huddled up, in the Morris-chair. On the floor, in front of him, lay the revolver."

"Perhaps he had committed to paper the interview of to-day?"

"That might explain the search."

"And the sudden flight could be attributed to fear. Things in the room are just as you have said. I'll take charge, and meanwhile I'll see that the room is left untouched."

Montgomery paced the veranda thoughtfully. Far away the clock in the spire of a tall church boomed the hour of three, and an automobile whizzed by the corner. He could not bring himself to believe that the railroad officials were behind the murder of their former chief counsel, although he realized that the chain of circumstantial evidence was strong against them. But why the robbery? Maybe there had been none. There was evidently no inventory of the papers of that sort which Hemingway kept.

A big car rolled under the *porte-cochère* and stopped. Montgomery recognized the occupants and stepped back into the shadow of a long colonial window.

"By George! it's John Duncan and his son."

He stepped forward to meet them. The elder Duncan wore a worried, harassed look, but his eyes were not furtive. They gazed straight into the scrutinizing ones of the chief as he asked the simple question:

"Dead?"

Montgomery nodded.

"Yes."

"Good God!"

"Miss Katherine," gasped the younger man. "How is she?"

"Bearing up bravely," answered the chief quietly.

"Tell me about it," broke in Duncan harshly.

Montgomery eyed him carefully. Was this a carefully worked-out effort to throw him off the scent? Was the man gambling on the iron in his nature? Was he innocent? Or was he an accessory before the fact and had he come in a panic to learn the details?

"Hemingway was shot and killed in his study at about five minutes after two o'clock this morning. One shot had been fired from his own revolver."

"Suicide?"

"Why did he jump at that theory so readily? Montgomery fixed him with his eyes. "No; murder!" He saw Duncan wince. "And, better than everything, I have an idea where I can find the murderer."

"What?"

"Yes; he told his daughter something this afternoon, which leads me to a clue."

"But——"

"Where had you been before you came here?" interrupted the chief sharply, turning suddenly to Alan.

"*The Morning Star.*" Alan stopped suddenly; he experienced an inexplicable sensation, as though he had said something which he should not. The chief dropped his eyelids that Duncan might not see the exultant glitter which he knew was there.

"Ah!" was all he said.

"And the man you suspect?"

"Some roughneck," replied the chief quietly, "probably came in to rob, was discovered, and then fired. That would

explain the shot from Hemingway's revolver; and they could have come so close together at a split-second interval as to make them seem one shot. It may not be as complicated as I think."

"No, I certainly not," agreed Duncan hastily. "Do you know"—he leaned forward confidentially—"I believe that the strikers had something to do with this."

Montgomery's professional lack of expression came to his aid. He gazed blandly, unsuspiciously at the magnate, as though hanging on every word.

"Why?"

"They're crazy sore at Hemingway, because they know he has been behind our position against giving in to their demands. I might have given in long ago, if Hemingway hadn't made me understand that such a move would be suicidal."

"Suicidal—yes."

Duncan fidgeted at the deliberate repetition of the unsavory word.

"So they might."

"You really think so?"

"I can't think of any one else, any other motive."

"You can't?"

"No; of course not."

"Won't you tell Miss Katherine that I'm—that we're here," broke in Alan impetuously. "I—she——"

"I'll speak to her," said the chief, and strode into the house. In less than five minutes he was back.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly, "but Miss Katherine says that she does not care to see either of you now, or at any other time."

Watching the two men closely, he saw surprise, unbelief written large on Alan's face. In Duncan, senior's, expression he saw no change, save a hardening of the jaw and an infinitessimal narrowing of the eyelids.

"I'm sorry," said the elder suavely. "Please tell Miss Katherine for me that if she needs any assistance in any way whatsoever to call on me. I am sorry that Mrs. Duncan is in Europe, or she would be here."

"Thank you." They exchanged bows. "I'm sure that Miss Katherine will need for nothing."

The big engine whirred, then suddenly the car leaped forward and sped down the drive and into the roadway. For a long time the chief stared after them. He scratched his head in perplexity.

"I wonder," he murmured; "now I wonder."

An hour later he was on the porch. Across the street a newsboy was shrilling "Extra!" at the top of his lungs. Montgomery hailed him and bought copies of both the morning papers—two extras. He read them very quietly, then whistled softly.

"I suspected as much," he told himself.

Spread across the front page of both papers was the announcement of the railroad wreck, as it had first appeared in the evening papers, and underneath was a statement from John Duncan, as president of the Cateret, Atlantic & Western Railroad, fastening the blame for the wreck and for the murder of Alvin Hemingway on the strikers.

Montgomery whistled softly.

"Talk about cleverness," he muttered admiringly. Then he strolled thoughtfully into the chamber of death.

CHAPTER FOUR

DAYS had passed since the funeral of Alvin Hemingway. John Duncan, set on his course, had followed up his first sensational newspaper anouncement with a steady pageant of press-agentry, and slowly and surely sentiment was being directed against the strikers. The train wreck by itself might not have altered sentiment, but with the atrocity which followed, the tide reached the highest mark and the ebb set in.

And Duncan was holding on tenaciously, fighting on and on, determined not to give an inch, knowing that eventually he would win. For the first time the strike-leaders had given an intimation that they might be willing to talk compromise, and Duncan had spiked their guns by refusing point-blank to deal with them as a body.

In the Hemingway home all was sadness. The terrible death of the father had cast the mansion, formerly a center of the city's social activities, into a pall of gloom. Mrs. Hemingway was still under the care of a trained nurse, and her daughter sat hour after hour, rocking back and forth, back and forth, thinking, wondering, conjecturing.

She sat now on the broad veranda. From up the macadam road came the familiar purr of a high-powered roadster, and she raised her eyes to see Alan's car. It turned in at the hedge-gate and rolled to a stop within a dozen feet of where she sat.

Very quietly she arose and started for the door.

"Katherine, wait, please," the young man's voice was pleading; "I don't ask anything of you save an interview."

She turned. "Well?" she questioned dully.

"I want to talk with you."

"I have no desire to talk with you. I am done with you and yours."

"Why?"

"I do not care to give my reasons."

"Is that fair?"

He had left the car and now stood beside her on the veranda—big, broad, masterful.

"It is."

"It is not!" His voice had assumed some of the dictatorial air of his father's. "Sit down; I only ask ten minutes of your time, and I intend to have it."

Prompted by curiosity, she obeyed dumbly.

He stared at her for a full minute.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well, what?"

"Tell me why you refused to see father and myself the other night—the fourteenth—when we came here at three o'clock in the morning? Tell me why you did not notice us the day of the funeral?"

"Your father," she said almost inaudibly, "is the cause of my father's death."

He sprang from his chair in horror.

"Katherine! My God, girl, you don't know what you're saying! That's murder you're accusing my dad of—do you know it?"

"Yes, I know it."

"But you're crazy—crazy!"

She eyed him curiously. "Do you mean, Alan, that you don't know anything about the break between my father and your father? Do you mean that you haven't heard anything about the scheme to blame the Horseshoe wreck on the strikers?"

"Go slow, please; this is all news to me. Begin at the beginning."

"I'll tell you," she said quietly; "it is your due. On the thirtieth, you remember our visit to the office; that afternoon Number Thirty-nine was wrecked at Horseshoe Cut. You remember the discussion which, I understand, occurred before that, and the end of which I heard. They sent us out of the room, and then your father coldbloodedly suggested that the coroner be fixed—as he has been—and the blame for the wreck thrown on the strikers. It was planned to immediately arrest one of the strike-leaders, keep him in custody until the whole thing had

blown over, and then discover that he was innocent, so that apparently no harm would have been done, save that the occurrence would have injured the cause of the strikers irreparably and the road could continue to operate in its present utterly rotten condition.

"My father was to do all this dirty work, and of course he refused point-blank. A row followed, and he was notified that he was no longer general counsel for the C., A. & W. He then told your father that at the first intimation of such an action by the railroad he intended to go before the Grand Jury and tell what he knew."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. My father told me that afternoon; but that isn't all. As he was leaving, and in the presence of Andrew Nolan, who, by the way, was present during the entire interview, your father threatened him. There, that's all. Now, draw your own conclusions."

He mopped his forehead. "God!"

"Well, what do you think of the situation now?"

"It looks bad—damnably bad," he admitted reluctantly. "But dad, he—he wouldn't."

"Suppose I can prove it?"

He grasped her arm roughly.

"You can't!" he sibilated. "You won't!"

"Listen, Alan," she said quietly, "I hate to lose you as my friend, and I've probably been foolish in telling you what I have; but if I can bring the man who is responsible for my father's death to justice I'm going to do it. I have powerful allies, and——"

"I don't believe it," he repeated inanely; "it's too preposterous, Katherine. Men don't do that sort of thing nowadays; all that's relegated to a past era of fiction. And dad—why, even if other men did, he wouldn't. He's a 'big business' man, true, with all the lax business morality which is considered justified by the fierce competition and generally unscrupulous methods of the day; but he wouldn't stoop to murder."

"He was willing to blame the strikers for the wreck, to have a man arrested and probably convicted."

"That's different, absolutely; no one would have suffered by that, for the man would never have been convicted; and while he would, by what you may term dishonest methods, have furthered his own business ends, still it was not a crime."

"And suppose I proved that he knew, that he was behind it?"

Alan stared fixedly at her. "Then, Katherine, I'm afraid that I'd stand by my father. Right or wrong, honest or dishonest, he's still my father, and he's been a mighty good dad to me." His voice broke pitifully.

She laid her hand gently on his arm. "Then, maybe you understand my position, Alan; father was all the world to me, too."

"You're wrong, I tell you," he said brokenly. Then he stumbled down the steps, started his big car, and was gone.

For a long time Katherine gazed through the avenue of trees to the white road which twisted by the door. The world was changed for her; her father was dead. And Alan——

The phone rang sharply, and Katherine answered it. Chief Montgomery was on the other end.

"Miss Katherine," came the big man's voice, "I'm busy and I can't come up; but I wish to see you for a few minutes. Can't you run down here for a little while?"

Twenty minutes later she faced the chief in his private office.

"I have some interesting news," he told her calmly; "but, first, answer a few questions. What do you know of Jim Mullin?"

"Jim Mullin?"

"Yes."

"Why," she hesitated, "I know that he's one of the special agents of the railroad."

"What else?"

"And that he's reputed to be crooked—very crooked. Two or three times the road has been on the verge of firing him."

"Been mixed up in dirty work, eh? What kind?"

"Claim-agents' work; fixing testimony. Father despised him. Why do you ask?"

"Because"—Montgomery smiled grimly—"at four-fifteen on the morning of the fourteenth Jim Mullin was picked up at the corner of Deering avenue and Clarke street with a bullet-hole in his chest. He is in St. Mary's Hospital in a dying condition, although he may live for weeks; but he refuses to tell anything about the shooting."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE man and the girl stared at each other in silence. Then she drew a long breath:

"Jim Mullin! So he was the man who killed father?"

The chief smiled grimly. "Easy there, Miss Katherine; don't jump at conclusions so readily. The whole thing may be coincidence, although I'm free to confess that it doesn't strike me that way. I know, as you remarked a minute ago, that Mullin has always hated your father; but, on the other hand, I know that Mullin has not stood well with the railroad for some time, because of two attempts he has made recently to double-cross them. Still again, it is possible that because of his notoriously bad character they may have hired him to do just this sort of a job, knowing that he would stop at nothing."

The girl's eyes shone suddenly. "That reminds me," she exclaimed excitedly, "that day before yesterday I stopped by father's office, and Mullin was in there. I heard their voices; Mullin's was loud and apparently angry. I think, though I'm not sure, that I heard him say, 'You'd better not!' and then father told him to get out of the office and not come back."

"So you think——"

"That it is possible the murder may have been committed as the result of personal grievance."

"That impresses me as being by far the better theory; but on the other hand, in a matter of this kind, it is our business to gather, not discard, theories. Circumstantial evidence against the railroad is damning; so it is against Mullin. Still again, there may be another person mixed up in it. Motives are easy to find. What I intend to do is to play a careful hand, to find out everything in the world which is possible before disclosing my suspicions by an arrest. Meanwhile, of course, every one suspected of complicity will be shadowed, and jolly good care will be taken that no one of them gets away; and meanwhile——" He paused.

"Meanwhile?"

"I have a plan," he smiled in slight embarrassment, "which I hesitate to even suggest to you; but I'm going to do it, because I'd rather have you undertake the work than any other woman I know, not even excepting Eileen McCarthy, the best woman on my force."

"Well?" She was leaning eagerly forward.

"Mullin, I believe, holds the key to the entire situation in his hands. He knows; of that I am confident. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that we get a confession, or a statement of some kind from Mullin, and that cannot be done by the exercise of any third degree methods. In the first place, the man is in a critical condition; all hope

for his life has been abandoned. I happen to know that Mullin has spoken to his wife about the matter, and the chances are that he has told her the truth about what has happened, for I know that she has been in to see me several times, poor thing! She knows that I suspect Mullin, and she's hovering around here like a hen whose one chicken is in danger. Isn't it funny," he interpolated, "that such a sterling little woman as she is can live for years with such a brute of a man, see him in his true, criminal colors, and still love him?

"But to get back to the subject in hand. I'm exercising what little finesse I have to get a statement, or even a good clue, from Mrs. Mullin; but at present my task is hard. She thinks that her husband will live, and while she has practically told me that she knows all about it, she will not tell what she knows. Now my plan——"

"Is to have me watch Mullin!" The girl was all animation.

The chief leaned back in satisfaction.

"Exactly; take the head of the class."

"How?"

"By virtue of my police powers I believe I can prevail on the hospital authorities to have you entered as a probation nurse. Mullin will not know it; but your duties will be to attend to him individually and solely, and if you cannot learn the true state of facts from him while in the rôle of nurse——"

Her face clouded slightly. "Would that be honorable?"

He leaned anxiously forward. "Listen here, Miss Katherine; I anticipated that objection from you, and I have an answer to it. You either want to bring to justice your father's slayer, or you don't. What you will learn from Mullin will be the truth, whatever it is. If it incriminates him, you need not feel like an executioner, for he is dying; if it incriminates the railroad, it is better that we know it. I'll admit that it is subterfuge; but so is the shadowing which a detective does when he's at work on a case, and surely no one will call that dishonorable."

"I think I see."

"And for the purpose of this case, I'm going to make you a member of my force and decorate you with a badge. You'll have *entrée* anywhere, then, and the nurses at the hospital will be given the tip, although none of them will know exactly what you are doing there. Think it over."

The girl paced the room in silence.

"I'll do it," she said quietly, pausing before his chair, her expression deadly serious. "I see your viewpoint, and I agree that it is the best thing. Now, give me your instructions."

"Good!" Montgomery rubbed his hands. "You're a brick, Miss Katherine, and you'll help me in this case as no one else in the world could possibly do. My instructions are simple. Nurse Mullin; be tender, kind, solicitous. Work on what finer sensibilities he may have, for every man, no matter how callous, has some. Gain his confidence; drum into his head a fear of God; work on his religious fear of meeting his Maker with an unconfessed crime on his soul; use tact, discretion. Your work will be made easy, and you will be enabled to give your entire time to his case. He, poor fellow, doesn't know hospital methods, and he will not realize that it is unusual for you to give most of your time to him; and, above all, keep me posted discreetly about anything you run across—any hint or sign or even the vestige of what might eventually develop into a clue. Remember, aside from my personal friendship for your father, I am vitally interested in this case from a professional standpoint. The public looks to me to apprehend the culprit, and people are already criticising my apparent inaction. So you'll be serving a double end. Is everything plain now?"

"Yes."

"Very well." He rummaged through his desk and brought forth a tiny police badge. With a great show of ceremony he pinned it on the inside of her black coat and solemnly swore her in as a member of the Cateret police force. That done, he shook her hand very gravely.

"Thank goodness for you, Miss Katherine; together we'll be able to do much. Just remember this: nothing which bears on Mullin is too trivial to be reported to me. Let me be the judge of what is important and what is not. You keep your eyes open, and remember things. Don't make notes of any kind in a note-book. If you are forced to jot down facts, do so on your cuff, and then, when you report things to me, erase what you have written."

"And as to a confession?"

"Get it in writing. Mullin cannot write; he is partially paralyzed; but take down his statement in the presence of at least one witness—better, two. Then make a cross, thus, and let him touch the pencil as it rests on the paper; then write the name, 'Jim Mullin,' and above and below the inscription, 'His mark.'"

"I must have witnesses?"

"Yes; that is absolutely necessary, especially if his confession incriminates the persons whom we suspect. If Mullin were going to live—— But the doctors tell me that he hasn't a chance in a million. And now for the hospital, where I'll make the arrangements."

Together they drove to the pretty three-story structure, which was St. Mary's Hospital. The chief entered with the girl, and they were closeted with the superintendent for some time. The arrangements were finally perfected, and the chief and Katherine rose to go, after the latter had received instructions from the superintendent.

And that night, at seven-thirty, Katherine went on duty as a probationer in the hospital, and the first step in the game had been taken.

CHAPTER SIX

KATHERINE breakfasted with the nurses next morning in the uniform of the probationer. Some of them recognized her; but a few well-chosen words discreetly dropped by the superintendent forbade the asking of questions. Later Miss Cartwright, the head nurse, called her aside.

"I understand from Miss Kane," she said, "that you are to special on the Mullin case and that you are not a trained nurse. I've had Miss Werner attend to the dressing of his wound this morning, and she has given him his morning wash, so that you will have none of the unpleasant part of it to do. You may take his breakfast in now, and that will give you a chance to meet your patient. For the rest of the day you may be there as much as you wish."

"What about conversation—will it hurt him?"

Miss Cartwright shook her head. "It won't do him any good, of course; but it won't hurt him. The doctors have abandoned hope. He may live one month, or one hour; but there isn't a chance for his life. I don't intend to delve into your personal affairs, but of course I believe I have an idea as to what you are here for. Therefore I don't hesitate to say that it would be better to talk to him. It isn't as though he had a chance for recovery."

Katherine nodded. "I understand, and thank you. Even though I'm not a nurse, or even a regular probationer, I'd be glad to have you correct me for every breach of hospital regulations, and to let me help you at any time you need help."

"Thanks; and I extend the same offer. Call on me at

any time and rest assured that I am not a gossip. I need not be more plain?

"No; I understand, and thank you again."

Miss Cartwright left Katherine at the door of the big, barren charity ward, with its double row of spectral cots, on each of which lay the wasted figure of a man. Some of the patients lay quietly, worn out with days and days of suffering, others tossed and groaned in a delirium of fever of pain; still others, convalescent, turned curious eyes on the newcomer and made light remarks of greeting.

Miss Gallant, the nurse on duty in the ward, came forward, her hand extended.

"I understand you're specializing on Mullin. That is he by the window at the far end. Poor fellow, I'm afraid he's pretty nearly gone."

Katherine walked slowly between the line of cots, her eyes on the massive form at the other end. So this was the man who had shot her father—his murderer—and here she was in the rôle of nurse, of Samaritan to him. She glimpsed him before he was aware of her presence.

He did not look the same man she had known as a roustabout special agent of the C., A. & W. He was thinner now; his cheeks were sunken visibly, despite the concealing bush of scraggly beard; his eyelids were down, concealing the orbs which had glittered so menacingly in past days; the big, gnarled hands of him were lying helplessly outside the bedclothes, twitching occasionally—spasmodic, muscular contractions, which somewhat frightened the girl at the bedside.

"Mr. Mullin." Her voice was very gentle.

He turned his head, and their eyes met. She breathed a sigh of relief; he did not recognize her. As a matter of fact, he had seen her but twice—once as he left her father's office in a temper, the second time in her father's touring-car. It was small wonder that he did not associate that pretty, spoiled child of affluence with this capable, plain nurse of the sickroom.

"Yes?" He surveyed her slowly, from the starched cap on her severely brushed hair to the tips of her rubber-soled shoes. "Say"—weakly—"you're a new one, ain't yuh?"

"I'm handling a few cases here, and yours is one of them. The hospital is too crowded now, and they had to take on extra nurses. I wanted to find out how you're feeling to-day."

"A'right." His voice was rasping, his articulation painful; even his breathing was audible.

She laid cool, white fingers on his forehead. It was almost parched with fever.

"Temperature high," she remarked with what she conceived to be a thoroughly professional manner.

"Always high," he returned gutturably; "burns like all hell."

She recoiled a little at the spontaneous profanity, and then smiled lightly.

"Here, now," she said lightly, "we'll try this." She uncorked a bottle of bay rum which she had brought, and with deft fingers rubbed his forehead and the top of his shaggy head with the cool, refreshing liquid. His body relaxed luxuriously.

"Ah-h-h! That's good!"

"I'm mighty glad," she said soothingly. "Did you sleep last night?"

"Never sleep."

"That's bad. Now, suppose I sit there and rub your head while you try to get a nap? It'll do you a world of good."

"Ye really mean ye'll sit there an' rub me head?"

"Why, certainly. She pulled her chair closer to the bed. "Now, don't talk; just relax and try to sleep."

He closed his eyes, and in a very few minutes his breathing became more regular. Tirelessly she massaged, with the cooling bay rum, stroking, rubbing, pressing her cool palms to his throbbing temples; and as she worked she found stealing into her heart an unexpected compassion for this man, whom she suspected of having killed her father. Such is the instinct in woman.

He slept; for a long time she sat motionless, gazing at him, wondering, speculating. Miss Gallant went by with some cracked ice for a feverish man, whose leg had been amputated the previous day, following a street-car accident.

"You should be a regular nurse," she said admiringly. "I've been trying to get him to sleep ever since he's been here, but he won't. He's got something on his mind."

When Mullin awakened a little over an hour later, he found Katherine still by his bedside, and his eyes brightened.

"Gee," he murmured awkwardly, "yer a good un!"

She flushed with pleasure. "Thanks. Have some ice?"

"If 'tain't too much trouble."

"No trouble; that's my work."

She returned in a few minutes with the ice, which she fed to him slowly, a tiny piece at a time. That finished, she drew her chair around and closer to the bed, so that she sat facing him.

"How are you feeling now?" she asked again.

"Better." His eyes closed hopelessly. "But it ain't no use; I'm done for." A pain seized him and he twitched. Her arms were about his shoulders in a minute.

"How are you?"

He smiled grimly. "Oh, I'm a'right, miss. I do that all the time; but, gee, them other nurses never paid no 'tention; you're different."

"I'm just a probationer," she explained smilingly; "I'm in on trial. I'm not a regular nurse."

"Best one here," he defended stoutly. His eyes held hers. "I like you."

"Oh, you do? How nice!"

"I mean it."

"I'm glad. But why?"

"I dunno why; you're different. There's something about you that gets next to me. I wished"—wistfully—"there was some one I cud talk to; some one I cud get to do a favor for me."

The girl's heart seemed to stop beating. Was her enterprise to bear fruit with this speed? She leaned forward, trying to conceal her intense eagerness. She mastered her voice with an effort. "Talk to me; ask me. I—I'm here to do things for my patients."

He seemed to draw into a shell. "Maybe I'd better not."

"Why not? Is it something you want—something I can get for you?"

"No-o; 'tain't anything like that. But it's something you can do."

"And why won't you let me do it? Surely you know I'd be glad to, for you, or any other patient."

"Did th' docs say I'm dying?"

She was nonplussed. "They haven't told me so," she parried truthfully, suddenly a bit sick of the part she was playing. It was one thing to extract information from a healthy man, and still another to play on the helpless side of a dying man's nature; but he had killed her father.

"I am," he said bluntly, "an' I know it; an' mebbe, if I can't get you to do it, I can't get no one. It's just to phone somewheres fer me."

"Oh!" She was disappointed, for she had confidently expected that he was about to confess to her. "Why, certainly; I'll do that. Who to, and what shall I say?"

He hesitated for a long time.

"I might get Molly—she's my wife—to do it."

"If you want her——"

"No; you do it. Ye never hear of John Duncan, president of the C., A. & W.?"

She drew in her breath sharply. "Yes," she said softly; "I've heard of him."

"Well, he—I——"

"Yes."

"I used to work for the railroad."

"Yes."

"And I want to get word to him."

"What—what shall I say?"

"Ring him up," he ordered nervously, "an' tell him that Jim Mullin, the special agent who was brought to the hospital the morning Alvin Hemingway was—was—shot, wants to speak to him private."

"Ah-h-h!"

"What's that?" sharply.

"Nothing. What else?"

"Not a thing; but, say"—as she arose to move away—"be sure to say it's Jim Mullin and that I was brought here the morning Hemingway was shot."

CHAPTER SEVEN

KATHERINE'S head whirled with a medley of wild, irreconcilable thoughts as she stumbled through the entry, down the steps, and to the phone, which rested on a table in a sort of an alcove under the stairway. Why did Mullin wish to see Duncan? How was it that Duncan did not already know of Mullin's wound? On the other hand, why was Mullin so nervous of suspicion? What was the connection between the notorious special agent and the head of the railroad?

She lifted the receiver. "Main 6-1-0-4," she called.

In a few seconds the voice of the private exchange girl at the railroad office answered.

"Number four, please." She paused in sudden horror; that had been her father's private phone. "No, I mean number two."

Duncan irritably answered the tinkle of the phone on his desk. He was older than he had been the day of the wreck—much older—and there were deep wrinkles about his eyes. His mouth was hard, his habitual sneer more bitter.

"'Lo!"

"Mr. John Duncan?" The girl fought for mastery of her voice.

"Yes. What is it?"

"This is one of the nurses at St. Mary's Hospital. There's a man here—a dying man—named Mullin, Jim Mullin. He asked me to tell you that he was brought here the morning that Mr. Alvin Hemingway was shot and to request that you come down immediately to see him." She paused, and then took a daring plunge. "He says positively that you must come—and at once!"

"What?"

"At once," he says; "he must see you immediately."

Silence. Katherine heard the shuffling of papers on Duncan's desk. Then she heard the slamming of a door and Duncan's voice saying, "'Lo, Nolan." She waited. Then, despite an evident effort to conceal his voice, she heard Duncan say, "There's hell to pay; Jim Mullin is lying wounded at St. Mary's, and he says I must come down there at once."

"Hello!" The girl tried to make her voice as natural as possible.

"Oh, hello!"—it was Duncan who answered—"tell him I'll be right down."

The two receivers clicked onto their hooks. Katherine sat in reverie for some time, her thoughts chaotic; then she hurried to her room, donned a hat and a long coat, called a taxicab, and sped to the office of Chief Montgomery. Briefly and succinctly she outlined the occurrences of the morning. When she finished, Montgomery grasped her by the arm and hustled her into the taxi again.

"St. Mary's Hospital," he ordered the chauffeur, "and be quick about it."

And as the car sped over the city pavements, he turned to her smilingly:

"You're wonderful; this is greater success than I allowed myself to dream of. The only mistake you made was in leaving the hospital."

"I knew I could see you and get back before they reached here, and besides, they cannot see me. Remember, I am known intimately to both Mr. Nolan and Mr. Duncan. Unless they see me they will never think of associating any one in the hospital with the city's detective force, and therefore it is up to me to keep my identity a secret. The nurses will all keep their mouths shut, I think."

"Don't be too sure; there are many ways of working the other end of a case of this kind, especially if our promise as to the railroad's liability is correct. The thing for you to do is to see these men when they come out without their seeing you; then, later they have a chat with Mullin, perfectly innocently and all that. Report to me just what happens after they go."

She alighted a half-block away from the big gray, stone building and walked in the side entrance. Quickly she doffed her coat and hat and donned once again the white, starched cap of the nurse. She stationed herself in the lobby outside the men's ward.

She saw Duncan and Nolan, their chairs drawn close to the bed of the sick man, conversing earnestly. Duncan's face was set, and he was gesticulating with his hands, which showed that he was under some terrible mental strain and that he was exercising every atom of repression he possessed. Nolan, too, was arguing animatedly with Mullin, and for a second the girl caught a glimpse of Mullin's face. On it was a smile, the like of which she had never seen; revenge, delight, power itself were delineated there. It was the face of a man who gloats.

Finally they arose, defeat showing in their iron faces. Quickly she stepped into the linen-room, and they saw nothing but a nurse's back as they passed out and to the stairs. She watched them from the window as they stepped into the big car and were whirled away. Then she walked to Mullin's bedside.

"Did your friends come?" she asked quietly.

He looked up at her, and once again the repulsive smile which she had seen came to disfigure his features.

"Yes, by God, they came!"

"You excited yourself too much," she reprimanded; "you shouldn't do that, you know."

"What difference does it make, so long as I'm gonna croak anyway? But there's some men on this earth as is gonna remember Jim Mullin when he's gone. They done me dirty, an'——" The man stopped suddenly. "Fergit it!" he ordered fiercely.

She laid her cool fingers on his forehead. "That's all right; just don't excite yourself."

Less than an hour later Miss Kane joined her. "You'll have an easier time nursing your special now," she smiled.

"Why?"

"He's to be moved to Number Eighteen—the best private room in the hospital."

"But he—the expense? I thought——"

"So did I; but John Duncan, president of the C., A. & W. is standing for the bills."

"You don't say."

"Yes; and he's paying for a special nurse, and has brought a special doctor here. Guess who the nurse is?"

"Who?"

"You!"

"What?"

"Mr. Duncan simply asked that a special nurse be appointed, and we naturally appointed you. You've got to run a bluff, and when this special doctor is here I'll arrange to be in the room myself, or have one of the other graduate nurses there. That will save you from embarrassment."

"Thanks, awfully; I can't tell you how I appreciate all this; but I'm a bit frightened. Suppose the new doctor—who is he, by the way—suppose he knows me?"

"I hardly think he will; he's from another town—a Doctor Singleton. Ever meet him?"

"No-o-o; I don't believe I know any Doctor Singleton. How soon will he get here?"

"Almost any minute."

"And how often will he come?"

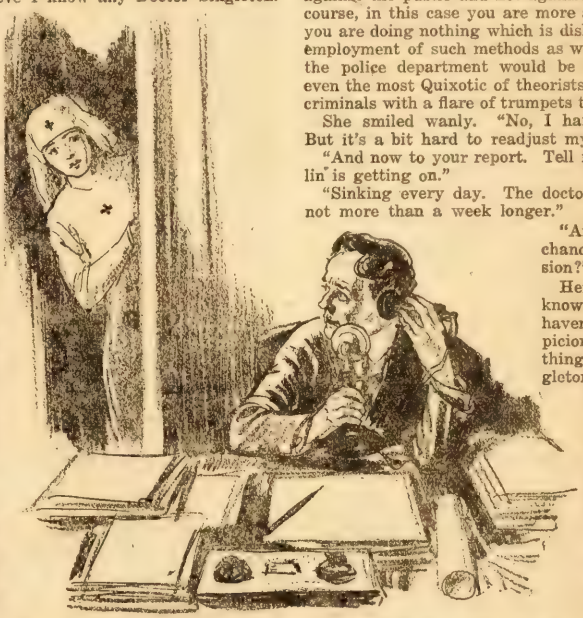
"He's to stay here with the internes."

"Oh!"

Less than an hour later a young man, carrying in one hand a suitcase and in the other a doctor's bag, took the front steps two at a time, breezed into the entrance of the hospital, and introduced himself to Miss Cartwright. She, in turn, called Katherine.

"Doctor Singleton," she said lightly, "this is your special nurse, Miss"—she hesitated—"Carter; Miss Carter, Doctor Singleton."

Their hands met and they glanced straight into each other's eyes as they murmured the conventional "Delighted." Then he turned quickly.



Singleton turned sharply and saw the girl staring, wide-eyed, at him.

"And now, Miss Carter," he said lightly, "let's go see our patient. How's the respiration?" Katherine breathed a sigh of relief at the foresight which had prompted her to learn the art of taking temperature, gauging respiration, filling in the form symptom-sheets, and so on. It enabled her to let Singleton know the patient's respiration as well as many other things essential for him to know."

She sat with him for five minutes or so, and his conversation was not of the case which they were to handle together. Later she went to carry Mullin some cracked ice, and when she left the room she found him in the hallway outside. By nightfall she was convinced that he was not disinterested.

"I wonder," she mused, "why he watches me, and where I've seen him before?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE chief arose from his desk to greet Katherine. The girl's eyes shone brightly and she walked with a springy, sprightly step which delighted him.

"I see that occupation is working wonders with you," he vouchsafed. "How do you like it?"

"It's absorbing, but I'm afraid I can't get it into my head that some men are all bad and others only partly so."

"Rather hard on the masculine gender in general, isn't it?" the chief asked.

"I didn't mean it that way. What I do mean is that at times I find myself thoroughly sympathizing with Mullin and feeling very much of a culprit."

"Get that our of your head. You are not trying to work an injustice; you're trying to help the law in its work of apprehending a public menace, for a murder is a crime against the public and not against a mere individual. Of course, in this case you are more acutely interested; still, you are doing nothing which is dishonorable. Without the employment of such methods as we are using in this case the police department would be helpless, and certainly even the most Quixotic of theorists would not have us seek criminals with a flare of trumpets to announce our advent."

She smiled wanly. "No, I hardly think that, either. But it's a bit hard to readjust myself."

"And now to your report. Tell me first of all how Mullin is getting on."

"Sinking every day. The doctors say that he will live not more than a week longer."

"And what are your chances of getting a confession?"

Her face clouded. "You know, Mr. Montgomery, I haven't any basis for my suspicion; but there is something about this Doctor Singleton which makes me believe that he may be an emissary of the railroad, sent there to watch Mullin."

"Of course; I've suspected that right along. But what causes you to think that?"

"He's been there eight days now, and never for a minute does he voluntarily leave me alone with Mullin."

"Is he really a doctor?"

She looked at the chief in frank surprise. "Why, I suppose so. You see, I'm not a trained nurse, and therefore not a judge of professional capacity. But he seems to know what he is about. He personally attends to the dressing of the wound and seems quite an expert."

"If he is a doctor, why hasn't he discovered that you are not a nurse?"

"Because I make no pretentions of being one. He knows that I am merely a probationer and therefore not supposed to know things; and he instructs me very carefully in all I have to do."

"I see; and does he ever hold any lengthy conversations with Mullin?"

"Not that I know of. It's a sort of turn-about case. He seems to watch me, and I know that I watch him."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Young, maybe twenty-six; handsome; evidently a thorough gentleman, and I should say a good doctor."

"Pleasant conversationalist?"

"Very."

"You like him?"

She flushed faintly. "Yes; very much."

"Be sure that it isn't too much," he advised sharply. "What are your chances of getting a confession from Mullin, with the proper opportunity."

"Good, I think; I am the only person to whom he ever speaks. He doesn't seem to like Doctor Singleton, and will never speak a word when he is in the room. Several times I have casually mentioned the name of Mr. Duncan and Mr. Nolan, and every time I do that same evil leer disfigures his features, which are none too prepossessing, anyway; and once"—she choked—"I mentioned my father's name and the wildest look came into his eyes. He stared at me for a second and then relaxed and sighed. I tell you, chief, a woman's intuition is God-given, and the more I see of that man the more certain I am that, even if he is not actually the murderer, he knows all about it."

"Has he ever seemed in a likely mood for confession?"

"Yes, several times; if it wasn't so ridiculous, I should say that he seems anxious. I can't fathom his reason; but he speaks wildly of revenge."

"I see; that's very interesting. Go on."

"There's nothing more, except that if I can manage to elude Doctor Singleton for any appreciable length of time, I believe I can do something with Mullin."

"Good; and remember this, Miss Katherine, get the confession in writing and have two witnesses to his mark—understand?"

She nodded bravely, bade him good-by, and left. She walked swiftly to the hospital, swinging along in the free, easy strides of a modern athletic girl, and many pedestrians turned for a second look. But she saw nothing; her mind was intent on the object of her chase. Plainly it was imperative that she make her opportunity to get a confession from Mullin. The man had scarce a week longer to live, and every hour was precious. She entered the hospital.

"Gentleman to see you, Miss Carter."

Katherine drew in her breath sharply. "Where?"

"In the waiting-room, there."

"Tell him I'm——" Something impelled her to turn. She saw Alan Duncan regarding her gravely. Very quietly she removed her coat and hat and walked in the reception-room to meet him, ignoring his extended palm.

"So you've entered the fight, too?" she asked frigidly.

He ignored her question.

"I was given to understand that you were Mullin's trained nurse," he said quietly; "but I hardly thought so."

"Thank you; I'm not interested in your opinions. The fact is that you've come here to spy, and you've succeeded."

"No; I've come here to have a plain, straight talk with you. Will you listen?"

"Yes."

"I know why you are here. I presume that you wear a police badge. I know that you believe my father the man behind your father's death. I believe you are wrong, and in order to prove that you are, I am ready to help you."

"What?"

"Exactly; I am my father's son, no matter what comes, Katherine; but I do not believe that the crime of murder is on his soul. This is neither the time nor the place for such a declaration; but you know that I love you."

"Alan!" She had risen.

"Sit down," gently; "let me finish. You have known that for some time. I have said it simply to explain my interest in your quest and to make you understand that I am not a spy and that I am sincere in my desire to ferret the guilty person. Father has been worried since that Thursday; but I know he is innocent."

"Let me explain a few things." The girl was leaning forward earnestly. "You, of course, know all about Mullin's presence here. You will remember that a nurse phoned for your father to notify him of the fact and to give Mullin's mandatory message. I was that nurse."

"You?"

"Yes, I; and I added something to the message. I told him that Mullin had ordered him to come. To use slang, I rubbed it in as hard as I could. Then I heard him say to some one else in the office, presumably Nolan, 'There's hell to pay now,' and so on. And your father came. He and Mr. Nolan sat there by Mullin's bed while I was standing at the door of the linen-closet watching, and if ever a man gloated evilly over others, Mullin did over your father and Mr. Nolan."

"But that doesn't prove——"

"No; of itself it doesn't prove conclusively that there is a criminal connection. But why did your father have Mullin given the very best private room in the hospital that same afternoon? Why did he hire a nurse? Why did he get a special doctor? Why has he deluged Mullin with expensive delicacies? Circumstantial, true; but damning. And did you know all of that?"

He paced the room nervously, turning like a caged tiger.

"No," he burst out fiercely, "I didn't dream of it, and I'm going to learn the truth from father. If, and I cannot believe it, he's guilty, then God help us all. If he isn't, by God, I'm going to prove it. Meanwhile you——"

"Will stay right where I am; and if you are sincere in your desire to learn the true state of affairs you will not have me removed as nurse. Isn't that fair?"

"Maybe; I don't know. Who's that man?" he asked abruptly, as a tall young man strolled slowly across the lobby and well within earshot.

She gazed at him in surprise. "Don't you know?"

"Certainly not, or I wouldn't have asked."

"That is Doctor Singleton, Mullin's special physician."

"Oh!" He stroked his chin introspectively. "He's a mighty good-looking chap."

"Yes, isn't he?" she agreed naively. "But what difference does that make?"

He flashed a look of sudden hatred at the other man, and the girl smiled to herself.

"Oh, nothing, of course," he answered jerkily. "What's he doing here?"

"I don't know; frankly, I thought he was a railroad spy, sent to watch Mullin, and not merely a doctor, as he poses."

"I think you're safe there. I have never seen him before and I don't think he's anything save a doctor. You see," simply, "I couldn't blame him for staying in the sick-room so much when you're there."

"Prettily put; thank you."

"Now, listen, Katherine; I'm going to have a talk with my father, and I'm coming back to tell you how it comes out. I pray to God that everything will be all right. Father is connected with it in some way; but I feel confident that it is not a criminal connection. However, whatever it might be, I want to know the truth. I've been kept in the dark by both sides thus far, and I don't think it is right; and I'll promise"—he gulped—"that I'll make no effort to have you removed, even though I know that you're here with the express intention of getting a confession which will ruin me and make the fulfilment of my world-dream impossible. Good-by." He crushed her fingers and strode out of the building, locking neither right nor left.

For a long time the girl stared after him. Then tears welled to her eyes and covertly she kissed the fingers he had crushed.

Abstractedly she started across the lobby and into the hall, which led to the nurses' quarters; and as she walked her mind shuttlecocked back and forth between Alan and Singleton. What if Singleton were not a railroad spy?

"Main 6-1-0-4!"

She paused as though shot. The voice was Singleton's, and he was calling the general offices of the Cateret, Atlantic & Western. She deliberately eavesdropped.

"Number two, please."

She advanced another step that she might not miss a word.

"Hello, Mr. Duncan? This is Singleton.—Yes.—Your son Alan has just left.—Yes.—He was talking with her for some time.—No; he's——"

Singleton turned sharply and saw the girl staring wide-eyed at him. The receiver crashed onto the hook. For nearly half a minute they did not speak; then he bowed elaborately.

"Checkmate!" he said with a forced smile.

CHAPTER NINE.

SHE did not move. "Well?"

"My eavesdropping was intentional," she remarked curtly.

"So I guessed."

"And you are a railroad spy?"

"Yes; there's no use of my concealing a known fact. And you?"

"A probationer."

He smiled indulgently. "Isn't that rather an insult to my powers of perception?"

"Probably; at least, I am not prostituting a profession to the gold lure, for I suppose you are well paid for your duties."

He flushed. "Yes," gravely; "I am well paid."

"And now?"

"And now, Miss"—he paused—"Carter, the cards are down on the table. Each of us understands the other. I have two people to watch instead of one, and I'll watch them."

"Did it ever occur to you," she questioned evenly, "that there might be something dishonorable in your avowed intention of diverting the course of justice."

"I am an adventurer by profession," he replied, "and I work for whomsoever pays me; but I'm loyal to those in whose employ I happen to be. Since you know, I don't mind telling you that I have been sent here merely to watch you and Mullin. I hardly suppose you thought that the road wasn't cognizant of your idenity?"

"I had hoped."

"You underestimate your opponents."

"And they wish something concealed; they are protecting a murderer, and you are assisting."

"Scarcely that; I have asked no questions and have been told nothing. I have been paid to do a certain thing, and that thing I shall do. If you can outwit me, all well and good, and may luck be with you. I am a good loser; but"—he eyed her closely—"I lose honestly. I do not resort to subterfuge, nor would I lose on purpose."

"Will you answer one question?"

"Perhaps."

"Are you really a doctor?"

"I am; I practised for two years before I became a black sheep."

"And you are satisfied with your mode of life?"

"Perfectly; I am a delightfully optimistic pessimist, a thoroughly content cynic. I sit back and earn my bread and laugh at the rest of the world. I live in the present and not in the future, or in the past. Not a laudable method of living, true; but it suits me, and I am accountable to no one."

"I can't appreciate——"

"No; you probably cannot. I have drifted pretty well around the world. I'm over thirty, you know, and I've seen these endless, petty wars and trivial strifes. They rather amuse me. In my business one must needs keep away from the personal element in everything he undertakes; therefore I allow myself to be hired to do anything which I conceive to be honorable, and I do it to the best of my ability. If I am clever enough to win, and if I thus, by that cleverness, bring sorrow to the other camp, I am sorry for a while, and then get over it. I assure you, it is an amusing life."

"And you've tried the other?"

"I most certainly have. After I'd tobogganed for a while, as many young men do, I tried getting back to nature. I cowboyed it; then I assumed the highly intellectual duties of a line-rider. Imagine, if you can, days without end of riding a cayuse along a wire fence dotting a cactus plain; snakes for companions; hot sun; little food or water at times; loneliness—God, what loneliness! Yes, I got back to nature, and it taught me merely that I needed to mix with humanity to get in and see the pleasures and sorrows of other people. I like to get in and dip my finger just so and stir a bit, and see what the others are doing. Then I move to another domestic civil war, or a business battle and offer my services again for hire. Were I wealthy, I would do what I am doing for the mere fun of the thing; as it is, I am supported by it; but it is no more morally wrong."

"And what will you do now?"

"Watch you like a hawk and see that you are not alone with our patient. I assure you, I shall enjoy the game; and frankly, I believe I'll win."

"That's as may be; I sincerely hope not. I feel that I am working toward a just end. Certainly there can be nothing wrong in an attempt to discover a criminal."

"No; and neither is there anything wrong in my obeying simple orders. 'Mine not to reason why,' and so on. I assure you that there is nothing personal in it; but there is nothing at which I will balk."

"Thanks for your frankness. I trust that things will work out well for both of us."

"And may I say that I sincerely admire your nerve and stick-to-itiveness. I really mean that. You are a woman after my own heart. It is a pity that you are merely a woman."

She smiled. "Peculiarly put; but nevertheless thank you for the compliment; and now I must go up-stairs to Mullin."

"I'll go with you," he said quietly.

For the rest of the afternoon they sat there together, conversing in low tones. Despite his distorted code, the girl liked him; she liked his frankness, and she could not doubt his sincerity. And now that she understood his status, she was interested in him, and during the afternoon he relieved the tedium by a recountal of his many experiences, all told modestly, and with a quaint philosophy which was new to her and therefore doubly delightful.

"And this Alan Duncan," he asked suddenly, "what of him?"

"What do you mean?"

"You and he——"

"Engaged?"

"Yes."

"No; we're not."

"Ten to one that's not his fault."

"Well?"

"I'd think less of him if it was."

"Thank you again, although you're appallingly impersonal."

"I can afford to be; we're enemies."

An orderly entered with the evening papers. Singleton glanced hurriedly over the large display type on the front page of *The Ledger* and whistled softly. He extended the paper to the girl.

"What do you think of that?" he asked quietly.

The girl read. She read that Terence Malone, one of the most militant of the new desperate strikers, had been arrested on the double charge of having caused the wreck of Number Thirty-nine and of the murder of her father.

Behind it all she saw the hand of John Duncan. A strong circumstantial case had been built up against the unfortunate victim of the railroad's ire, and they had not neglected the opportunity of seizing in custody the man against whom the accusation would most likely be given credence. Malone had been actively identified with the strike all the way through; on the few occasions when rioting of a minor variety had been attempted it had been Malone who led. He was a notorious drunkard and brawler, yet withal an excellent workman. However, in the ranks of the strikers there was no man more likely to have committed the crimes charged.

He had been arrested by one of the special agents of the railroad. The theory of the railroad was carefully worked out. They could prove, they said, that the day before the wreck of Number Thirty-nine, Malone had been drunk and had made dire threats. They stated that this was reported to them. Further, they claimed that immediately after the wreck a man, whose identity was not known, had given Alvin Hemingway information, which pointed the finger of suspicion at Malone. The account further stated that Malone knew of this, and that was the motive for his murder. It was a wonderfully developed case, and as the girl read her horror grew. Plainly, it was more than ever imperative that she get a confession from Mullin, and the more she knew of him the more confident she felt that he knew everything, even supposing that it had not actually been his hand which had fired the bullet.

"What do you think of it?" questioned Singleton again.

Her voice was very subdued. "It is monstrous," she said evenly, "and I warn you now that I intend to work twice as hard as I ever did before to get the information I seek —understand?"

"Perfectly," he answered quietly; "and may the best one win."

CHAPTER TEN

ALAN looked across the dinner-table into the steel-gray eyes of his father. The elder Duncan met the glance and smiled gently.

"What is it, son?"

"I'd like to have a chat with you after dinner."

"About what?"

"Something in particular; I'd rather not mention the subject now."

John Duncan's face clouded. His son's manner portended storm.

"All right, son; we'll take our cigars in there."

Ten minuates later they faced each other. The elder Duncan lounged in a leather-cushioned easy-chair. The younger paced the room nervously, clasping and unclasping his hands.

John Duncan knew what was coming, and he summoned to his aid every particle of the nervous energy which had placed him on a pinnacle in the business world. He was to battle—he understood that—battle for his son. And he waited.

Alan cleared his throat. John Duncan did not notice. He waited for the first shot from the other camp.

"It's this, dad," broke in Alan, with his father's abruptness; "I want to know everything you know about this Hemingway affair."

The father's eyelids flickered for a brief instant.

"What is it you wish to know, son? I shall be glad to answer any questions."

"I wish to know everything—everything that you know."

"Be more specific, please."

"Well, then, is it true that you and Hemingway really rowed the afternoon of the wreck, when you asked him to do that dirty work"—Duncan flinched—"about fixing the coroner's jury, as some one else has since done?"

"Yes."

"Did you threaten him?"

"I'm afraid that in the heat of the moment I did utter words which might look damning in print."

"Did you fire him?"

"Yes."

"Had he said that he would expose the whole scheme?"

"He did."

The boy mopped his forehead nervously. "It looks rotten, dad."

"Go on with the inquisition, son, and get it out of your system. I pledge you my word that I will tell you the truth."

"When was the first time that you knew Mullin was at the city hospital—at St. Mary's?"

"Two hours after he was taken there."

"Why didn't you go to see him before he phoned for you?"

"There was no need. Mullin and I were not connected in any way."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain; I scarcely knew him by sight. He was merely a special agent, and a very notorious one."

"Then"—the boy bit off the words viciously—"why did you, the president of the railroad, rush to his bedside when he sent you a mandatory order?"

Silence. Duncan coughed slightly. "I went, son, because I had to go."

"God! Why?"

"I cannot explain that. I had to go. I didn't know then what he had to say to me, and it was imperative that I find out."

"Then—then why did you have his room changed? Why did you hire a special nurse? Why did you have a special doctor sent? Why the stream of delicacies he has been receiving?"

"That, son, is something which I will not explain to you, for the very simple reason that you would not believe I was telling the truth. But why these questions?"

"Because, father, I'm worried—terribly so. If you were on trial now you'd be convicted in a minute as an accessory to the murder of Alvin Hemingway."

"I know it."

"Then why don't you clear yourself to me?"

"I cannot, son."

"Cannot! Why?"

"I do not wish to make statements which you would not believe. I can simply assure you that I had nothing whatever to do with Hemingway's death."

"And I," said the boy impetuously, "am I to carry through life the thought that you might be——"

"Don't you believe me?"

Alan waved his hands helplessly. "The evidence—it's terrible!"

"Agreed; but——"

"What of your connection with Mullin? What hold has he over you?"

"A very strong one. I cannot explain now. I may some day."

"Have you any objection to my working to discover the true murderer and the motive? Is there any reason why I should not? Is there any possibility of its reacting on me through you?"

"I would rather that you did not, son; but you are a man, and may do as you please. It probably will not come back to me."

"Probably?"

"It may. Oh, I can't explain. Maybe in a day, two days, a week, I'll be able to. Can't you let things alone for the present? Why bother?"

"Because, father, it means everything to me. It means your good name; it means my happiness. You know, Katherine—I——"

"I understand."

"Why don't you trust me?"

"I dare not. You would not give credence to my story, and if I told you, you, in the impetuosity of youth, would do something which would be certain to ruin my life."

"Yet you give me permission to work on this case, to ferret out a murderer, and you assure me that it will not come home to you."

"I do. Now, listen here, boy. I may as well admit that my reason for giving you permission is the knowledge that it is absolutely impossible for you to discover anything. I know what I'm talking about."

"You don't believe for a minute that Terry Malone is the murderer?"

"Certainly not; although that is told you in confidence."

The boy faced his father squarely.

"You and I, dad," he said, "are products of different schools. I think your business methods are infamous. Am I to believe that it is right to sacrifice everything which is right and good in the mad rush for dollars? Am I to have all my illusions shattered? Am I to believe that my father is in the clutches of a notorious crook, and yet that he is not guilty as an accessory? I love you, dad, you know that; but I'm afraid."

"You don't think I've lied?"

"No; but I don't believe you've told the truth. I'm going, dad, and I'm going to bend every energy, every effort toward discovering the truth in this matter."

The elder Duncan arose, and the eyes of father and son clashed.

"This hurts me, son; I'm sorry, terribly sorry that you haven't the slightest confidence in me. But if you feel as you do, there is no use discussing it further. I don't know but what I'm glad over your attitude; but it divides our paths until the future some time, until there shall have come a rift in the clouds; until then, adios."

"Good-by, father, for the present."

They shook hands and their eyes were mist-clouded. Abruptly the boy turned away and strode to the door. With his hand on the knob, he turned.

"Father, may I ask you one question?"

"Yes."

"And will you tell me the strict truth?"

"If I answer it at all."

"Don't you know," Alan gulped painfully, "don't you know that Jim Mullin murdered Alvin Hemingway?"

The elder Duncan stared for a long time.

"Yes, son," he answered with forced calmness, "I do."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FOR fifteen minutes the phones at St. Mary's Hospital had been ringing wildly; for fifteen minutes there had been a frantic scurrying of nurses to sterilize operating instruments and paraphernalia, to prepare extra beds, to make ready for the score of people, broken and maimed —some of them already dead—who were being rushed to the institution.

Less than two miles outside the city limits of Cateret lies West Lake, a small body of water, with its attendant boathouse, bathing beach and picnic ground. The lake is reached from the city by an automobile bus-line, and on this day the Cateret Special, the prize train of the system, had crashed full into the bus, which at the time was loaded with pleasure-seekers, and it had been estimated that twenty-one persons were either dead or seriously injured.

Miss Cartwright phoned for doctors all over the city; but there were very few able to respond. Critical cases seemed the rule rather than the exception, and many of the best doctors found themselves utterly unable to come to the hospital for the series of delicate operations which they knew must be performed.

Then the first ambulance arrived at the hospital and the battered and broken bodies of the young men and girls were carried inside. Miss Kane put her head in the door of Mullin's room and beckoned authoritatively to Singleton. He faced her in the hall.

"You've heard about the terrible accident to the West Lake bus?"

He nodded.

"Well, we cannot get a sufficient number of doctors to take charge of the operations. I shall have to ask you to come down to the operating-room."

"I can't."

"This is no question of can or can't," sibilated the nurse; "it's a question of your professional ethics. You must!"

Singleton turned slowly and surveyed the scene within the room. From over the tops of a tree-hedge the sun streamed into the window and played hide-and-seek in the plainly brushed but luxuriant hair of the little probation nurse. In the middle of the snowy cot lay the emaciated form of the dying Mullin.

Singleton knew that Mullin was eager to talk to Katherine alone, and he suspected the context of what he had to say. It was dangerous to leave them alone together a half-hour, and all for which he had fought might be negatived. To his ears came the pitiful wailing groan of a young girl in mortal agony.

"Damn it!" he rasped. "I'll go!"

"I'm going down to the operating-room," he told Katherine harshly. "I'm a doctor, and they need me. I hope you will govern yourself accordingly." Then he left.

For a long time Katherine stared out of the window in silence. Would it be fair to her to take advantage of his absence to work on Mullin for a confession? Singleton had deliberately given her an opportunity, because the call of his profession was strong in him. She hesitated; then the other side of the picture presented itself to her mind.

Of the fact that this man Mullin either had killed, or knew the details of the murder of her father, she had no doubt. Singleton was there as a spy, and his object was

to frustrate the course of justice. Was it not as Montgomery had explained—that many things are necessary in ferreting crime which would not be tolerated under ordinary conditions. Her mind was made up. She bent over the bed, her lips drawn into a fine, white line. Mullin raised his eyes weakly and they rested on hers.

"Mullin," she said tensely, "you have a crime on your soul. You wish to speak to some one—to me. Later you can have a priest."

The man nodded weakly.

"I don't want to coerce you. If you wish to speak to me, I will be glad to hear what you have to say; but if you are going to say anything, say it now."

He nodded again.

"Get—pen—and—paper," he articulated hoarsely. "I—will—dictate—confession."

Her heart was pounding tumultuously as she quickly reached pen, paper and lap-rest. Then she wrote as he dictated:

"I heard Nolan—and Mr. Duncan"—the man coughed painfully—"talkin' about Hemin'way. They—called me in—w'en they heard I overheard—them." He paused, and his body relaxed. The girl, eyes shining, leaned closer.

"Go on, please. Tell it all."

For a second their eyes met, and across the face of the dying man there flitted again that terrible, evil smile. The girl shuddered involuntarily.

"They tol' me Hemin'way—was goin' t' spill ther beans."

"What?"

"Was goin' t' tell that they was goin' t' blame—ther wreck—on ther strikers. They—said they—wanted him put—outa ther—way—see?"

"Yes."

"Then they tol'—me—t' do it."

"Good God!"

Again the same, inscrutable smile.

"Yes; they—was sore. I winked—at them, an' went. I seen him—w'en he went in—his house; damn big house it is. Lights went—out. I waited—climbed in ther window. All—of a sudden—I seen—him sittin' in chair—ghosty." The murderer coughed again and twitched with agony. The girl's pen scratched to the end of the sentence. For the minute she was absolutely impersonal. She leaned over him, and her eyes burned straight into his.

"Go on—quick!"

As though under a hypnotic spell, the man's voice quavered on:

"First thing I knew—I seen—moonlight on—gun-barrel. I had my rod——"

"Rod?"

"Gun. I had my gun in me—hand. I guess we both fired—together. Sounded like one—bullet. He got me—damn him." The girl winced at the sudden bitterness of his tone. Why should this man harbor a personal enmity toward her father?

"Well?"

"I got—him, too. I got away—till I dropped—and then they took me—an' brought me—here. But—they're payin'—them damn railroaders. They're payin'!"

He relaxed suddenly and lay stretched out on the bed. Katherine paced the room nervously, thinking, thinking, thinking. In her hand she held the confession.

Mullin dozed. Other doctors came and assisted in the orgy of operations down-stairs. The clock chimed a new hour, and then another. Finally Miss Kane and Doctor Singleton, worn, tired, their eyes dulled and weary, stepped into the room. Mullin met Singleton's eyes, and then smiled at Katherine.

"I'll—sign—it now," he said weakly.

Singleton straightened.

"What?"

"Mullin has confessed something to me. I have taken it down. Can you read, Mullin?"

"Yes."

"Is this it?" She held the paper before his eyes.

"Yes."

"It would never go in court," started Singleton, and then bit his lips.

Katherine turned to the nurse. "I can trust you, Miss Kane, not to breathe a word of this?"

"Certainly."

Then slowly, distinctly, dramatically Katherine read the confession. At the conclusion not a word could be heard.

"Is that you're confession?"

"Yes."

"Do you swear solemnly that it is true."

"I—swear."

His eyes met Singleton's. He smiled.

Quickly Katherine wrote his name, and he touched his finger to the mark.

She signed her own name as witness.

"Yours, please, Miss Kane."

Miss Kane signed. Then the girl turned to Doctor Singleton.

"Now, doctor, I'd like your name here as a witness."

He glanced first at Katherine and then at the nurse. With as good grace as possible, he signed.

"You win the first move," he said in a low voice to Katherine; "but you've violated the rules of fair play, and I won't hesitate to do the same."

A half-hour later Singleton phoned Duncan the details of the confession. The voice of the president came back to him like chilled steel:

"Get it!" snapped Duncan, and rang off.

Singleton paused in the hallway and stretched. He was tired. Katherine, white-faced and frightened, ran to him. She clutched him by the coat-sleeve.

"Well?" he asked kindly.

"Mullin," she gasped, "Mullin has just died!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

"GET it!"

Singleton reviewed Duncan's curt command. He enjoyed receiving orders of that kind. If only the person against whom he must be pitted were a man instead of a woman. But the fates had decreed otherwise.

Singleton was a man to whom the word "fail" was stranger. During the brief, adventure-studded years of his roving life he had learned to know men, and he realized that Duncan meant what he had commanded. "Get it, and at whatever cost."

In the first place, what was Katherine's most logical course? Montgomery, of course. He knew that she was reporting daily to the capable, competent chief of police, and she realized that with a document of such import in her possession she must take it there. It therefore devolved upon him to frustrate her plan.

With him, to think was to act. He snatched his hat from the entry tree and walked rapidly down the street. At the corner he hailed a taxi-driver.

"I wish you to rent me your machine. I am an expert chauffeur. I also wish you to do as I bid and ask no questions. It will be worth your own price—see?" He turned back his coat to exhibit a badge. "I am a special agent of the C., A. & W., and no harm will come to you. Are you willing, and will you keep your mouth shut?"

The taxi-driver inspected him critically.

"It's on the level?"

"Yes. What's your answer?"

"I'm on—shoot!"

"Good; post your taxi in front of St. Mary's. A young lady dressed in a black coat-suit and hat and veiled will come down those steps in a few minutes. If your car is there she will hail you. Take her as a fare. She'll ask to be driven to the office of the chief of police. I will meet you at the corner of Spruce and Van Buren avenues. Get out and give me the machine."

The man recoiled slightly.

"I don't like that chief of police business. Besides, it sounds like abduction."

"It's not, I tell you. I can't explain. I've shown my badge, and you can call upon John Duncan, at the C., A. & W. office to verify things, if you wish. Tell him that Singleton has asked for the use of the cab. The road will protect you, and the matter will be worth your while, if you keep your mouth shut. What about it?"

"Very well."

"You won't fail me?"

"No."

"Good." Singleton strode back to the hospital, which he entered through the side door. Once inside, he walked to the chart alcove and waited. In less than ten minutes Katherine dressed in the manner he had described, crossed the up-stairs hall and entered Mullin's room. Immediately Singleton left the building again, waved a signal to the taxi-driver, and walked to the appointed place.

He was garbed in a slouch hat and a long ulster, and as he walked he turned the collar of his coat high about his neck and pulled the hat far down over his eyes. A glance into the shiny window of a store assured him that Katherine, being unsuspicious, would never detect his identity, and he waited smilingly. It was a nervy game which he was playing; but he knew that, as Mullin was dead, the keynote to the entire situation was the confession. At the corner of Spruce and Van Buren he entered a drug-store and phoned John Duncan.

"Listen," he said in a low voice, "this is Singleton. The person who has the paper I mentioned will be at Warehouse Number Eleven in the yards in a half-hour. Meet us there—understand?"

"Yes," snapped Duncan curtly, and the connection was broken.

Within five minutes the taxi whirled up to the corner, and Singleton saw Katherine inside. As the cab rolled by the corner, Singleton pretended to dart across the street. In a jiffy he was on the driver's seat, with his hand on the wheel. At the same second the chauffeur leaped out of the other side, and the car sped forward as the spark and gas levers were advanced.

Straight down Spruce street raced the car, easily and steadily, showing that Singleton had spoken truly when he laid claim to expertness as a chauffeur.

Inside the cab, Katherine saw, and gradually understanding dawned on her. She leaned forward to the speaking-tube with difficulty.

"Let me out," she shrilled, "or I'll scream!"

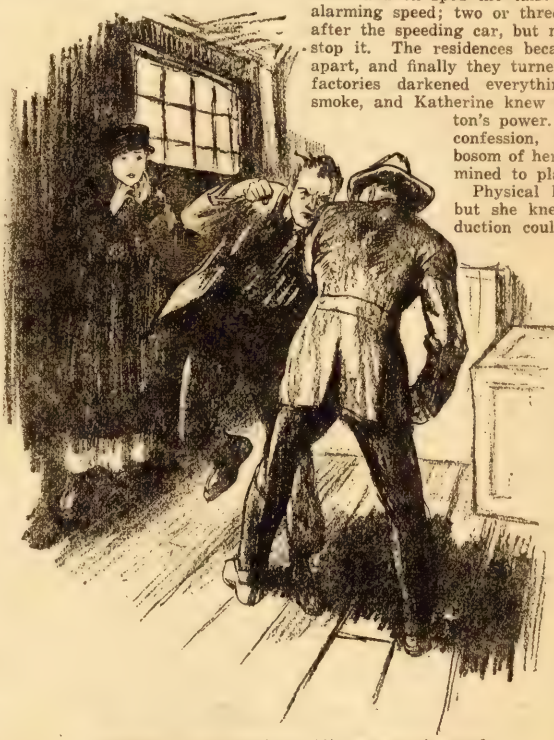
The driver's head did not turn, nor did he answer.

She wrenched at the doors and could not open them. She screamed, and realized that her voice did not carry outside the car.

On and on sped the taxi. Corners were cut with alarming speed; two or three times policemen stared after the speeding car, but not a move was made to stop it. The residences became farther and farther apart, and finally they turned into a street in which factories darkened everything with their belching smoke, and Katherine knew that she was in Singleton's power. She felt timidly of the confession, placed securely in the bosom of her dress, and grimly determined to play the game to the end.

Physical harm she did not fear; but she knew that such a bold abduction could mean but one thing—the railroad was desperate and would stop at almost nothing to get the confession from her. At first she thought of destroying the paper, and then laughed away the idea as being ridiculous. That, she knew, was what the road wanted. Once destroyed, they felt that the verbal accusation, since Mullin's death, could be refuted. The written confession was unanswerable.

They turned into the railroad yards and pulled to a jerky halt in front of a big warehouse on the edge. Not even a yardman was in sight, for the warehouse before which they stopped had long been in disuse, save in emergencies. Singleton leaped from the front seat and opened the door. His face had lost the boyish lines of humor and instead his jaw was set and his manner radiated unconquerable determination.



Singleton set himself as Alan sprang forward.

"This is no time to discuss right and wrong," he snapped angrily, forestalling her comment. "Will you walk into that warehouse with me, or shall I carry you?"

She glanced at the man; she read his face, and accepted the inevitable as gracefully as possible.

"I'll walk."

He took her arm firmly as she alighted, and they entered the warehouse together. Fear for the confession, which she held in the bosom of her dress, and a sense of outrage struggled for mastery. The latter conquered.

"This is playing the game according to the code?" she asked scathingly.

The man flushed slightly.

"It was you who made it necessary. You made the initial dishonorable move in the game, if anything connected with it is honorable. You took advantage of my decency—the decency which forced me to answer the call of duty—to get that confession. I knew that Mullin had only a short time to live; I also knew that he would probably confess whatever he had to confess. And still I trusted like a fool!"

"You are trying to justify yourself, Doctor Singleton. Frankly, I do not feel the slightest fear, and I can assure you that you will suffer for this. Abduction is a rather heinous offense."

He shrugged.

"Don't try to frighten my nature to stop at half-way measures. I'll come right to the point. You understand why I have brought you here. It is that confession. I'll be obliged if you'll hand it over."

She sparred for time. Plan after plan flashed through her head and was discarded.

"And if I do?"

"I shall be pleased to drive you back to the city, wherever you direct."

"You are not afraid?"

"No; I am not pleased at the prospect of my immediate future, but I have never been one to balk at the process of taking medicine."

"And what would you do with the confession were I to give it to you?"

"Burn it here, now."

"Don't you realize that the testimony of myself and the nurse would have as much weight as the written confession?"

"I do not; of course, they would make out a bad case against Nolan and Duncan, but it wouldn't be one-tenth as conclusive as that written confession. There's no chance to rebut that; not a possibility of distorting it to another meaning. With verbal testimony the witness always faces an uncompromising cross-examination, and the jury might be convinced. No; as you say, the case is very strong either way; but for Duncan and Nolan to allow you to keep that confession is suicidal. And now, what do you say?"

"You remind me of the man who puts a pistol to another's head and requests the loan of a dollar."

"A well-put smile; and your conclusion, I suppose, is that the best thing you can do is to give up gracefully."

"Not at all. I refuse point-blank to surrender the confession."

"Ah-h-h! You won't!"

"No."

"Then"—he spoke determinedly—"I shall have to take it from you."

Her face went white.

"You mean——"

"Exactly; I'm sorry, but this is not the time to balk at a slight thing like that. I should advise that you surrender it without undergoing the humiliation of having me search your clothes for it."

"Surely, you don't mean——"

"Pardon me, I do. Now, what's the answer?"

He was standing in front of her, and their eyes met. Hers flashed defiance, anger, outraged womanhood; his were quiet, even, unflickering.

"If you want that confession," she said sharply, "you'll have to take it! I'll never give it up!"

He seized her arm in a firm, vise-like grip.

"Very well, then," he answered grimly; "I'll take it!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ALAN DUNCAN fiddled idly with the papers on his desk. Work was, and had been for many days, an impossibility. True to his word to his father, he had tried to discover the truth of the Hemingway murder matter. Terry Malone still occupied a cell in the county jail; he had been committed for trial by the higher court, after a farcical preliminary examination, and Alan could not but admit that from a purely business standpoint the idea of arresting him on the dual charge of train-wrecking and murder had been Napoleonic. Already the strikers were less strident in their demands, and it looked as though the railroad held victory in its hands.

The phone rang, and he answered nervously.

"Hello?"

"Hello." Alan stiffened at the other's voice, for he recognized Chief Montgomery. Days before he had proffered his service to the chief, and they had been accepted. "This Alan Duncan?"

"Yes."

"This is the chief. Important complications in that matter we were speaking about. Come down at once."

"Be there in ten minutes."

In less time than that Alan faced the chief across the big desk.

"Now, son," said the elder man quietly, "I can't lay all my cards on the table yet, but I'll let you see some of them. When I phoned you, Mullin's wife was just leaving here."

"What?"

"Yes; and she told me the story she's been wanting to tell ever since the night of the murder. It's rather knocked me lop-sided, but she told me the truth, of that I am confident."

"What did she say?"

"Can't tell you yet. Another thing—did you know that Mullin died this afternoon?"

"No!"

"Yes; and before he died he wrote out a confession, which Miss Hemingway has in her possession."

"You don't mean——"

"Never mind what I mean. But I don't like the looks of this man Singleton in the affair, and I'm going down to the hospital. One of the nurses phoned me about the confession, and I wish to find out a thing or two in a hurry. Now, come."

They drove rapidly to St. Mary's. The chief entered the building and returned a few minutes later with his forehead furrowed.

"There's hell to pay now," he snapped. "Katherine left here soon after Mullin died. Miss Kane thought she was headed for my office. She got in a taxi outside. Several minutes before Singleton had a phone conversation with your father, and then he, too, left."

"You don't suspect——"

"Foul play? No; nothing like that. But they're evidently bent on getting that written confession which Katherine has—the damned fools!" he finished with emphasis.

"What shall we do?"

"I'm going back to the office. You take a taxi and go see your father. Interview him tactfully, but make him understand you realize he's in the game, and that you're going to know where Miss Katherine is. Handle him with

gloves, if you can; but if you cannot, go at him without. This is nasty business, and abduction is a rotten crime. It's up to you. Keep in touch with me, and we'll keep each other posted."

"Good!" Alan leaped from the car, hailed a taxi at the next corner, and was whirled back to his office. He burst open the door of his father's private room and found it empty. Frantically he pressed the button and the stenographer answered.

"Miss Galliand," he snapped, "where is Mr. Duncan?"

"Why, he's gone out," she smiled.

"Gone out! When? Where?"

"About ten minutes ago."

"Where did he go?"

"I'm not sure."

"Where do you think?"

"He was dictating to me when the phone rang. I heard him say, 'Very well, Warehouse Eleven,' and then he rang off suddenly. He dismissed me, and then left here a minute or so later."

"Ah, very well."

Warehouse Number Eleven. Alan knew where that was—the oldest, most dilapidated one of the number which the road owned. Again he entered a taxicab and was driven through the city streets. When almost at the railroad yards he remembered the warning of the chief that they keep in touch with each other, and he wasted many precious minutes informing that official of the startling developments he had found. Then, once again he was in the cab and speeding toward the yards.

It was all up now. Not for a second did he doubt that his father was guilty, although there was a lurking suspicion in his mind that things were not as they seemed. But in view of the evidence which he had before him, including his father's humble attitude toward Mullin, the furnishing of special nurse and doctor, the admission that he knew Mullin was the murderer, and this abduction—there was not much room left for conjecture. It was the old case of two and two.

The November air was biting, and night was falling. Already the street-lamps were flashed on, although the hour was early and workmen had not yet stopped their day's tasks. At the yards, Alan left the machine, after ordering the driver to wait, and he sped across the network of tracks toward the line of long, rambling buildings, which were the warehouses.

"Number Eleven." The letters stared at him gauntly through the fast-failing light. He executed a detour and came up at the window on the other side.

He saw Singleton with his arm clutching the girl, and she was struggling to free herself. Her waist was torn—badly torn.

"Good God!"

Alan sped around the side of the warehouse, doffing his coat as he ran. Singleton and the girl! He had dared!

Alan saw red. This, then, was final with him. If he could only get at the man once.

Faintly he heard a cry for help. He seized the heavy door and wrenched.

It was locked!

He cursed in futile rage. Then he ran back to the other side of the building.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

FOR an instant Singleton released his grip, and they stared at each other unflinchingly.

"I'm in earnest, Miss Hemingway," he told her calmly; "but I hate to force this thing from you. Hadn't you better save yourself this unpleasant scene?"

"Don't waste your breath, you brute! And I guess it's no use to threaten; but you'll suffer. Things such as this do not go unpunished. You'll have to take it."

He whistled softly.

"I admire your spunk; but"—his jaw set again—"it's up to me. I only wished to assure you that I never bluff, although I'd give a thousand if you were a man instead of a woman."

"If I were a man," she flashed, "you'd be taught a lesson. You might attack defenseless women——"

"Time is precious." He stepped closer and again seized her arm. With a mighty effort she wrenched free and leaped backward, shrilling a call for help at the same time. All of the woman instinct was uppermost.

Singleton seized her arm again, pressing deeply into the cool, firm, white flesh. She struck him with her closed fist, struck hard, and an amethyst ring on her hand cut into the flesh near his eye. The blood appeared; the red stain widened and trickled downward like a scarlet snake.

"Cat!" he snapped. "Will you give it up?" His arm was around her waist now, pressing her to him.

"No," she panted, fighting desperately, and with the fury of an atavism; "no, no!"

"Very well." As though she were a feather, his left arm pressed her against his muscular body. His right hand tore at the bosom of her dress, ripping the filmy black substance of which it was made.

"Stop!" she screamed; "stop!"

"Will you give it up?"

"No; I—— Help!"

She struggled free and leaped away, but he had her in a bound. He heard the crackle of the paper and seized it roughly. For an instant they gazed straight into each other's eyes, breathing hard. Then——

From the back of the warehouse came the crash of glass, and Duncan leaped into the room.

"Katherine! What does this mean?"

She trembled as she pointed toward Singleton.

"That dog! Mullin's confession."

Singleton set himself as Alan sprang forward and his left crashed into the face of the railroad president's son. Duncan recoiled, and then, as Singleton followed up his advantage with all of the skilled boxer's ferociousness, Duncan covered prettily and clinched.

"Thank God you've come!" grated Singleton. "I'd rather fight a man any day."

Alan broke loose from the clinch as his head cleared from the impact of the first blow, and the men fell into their boxing poses. They were a beautifully matched pair, and the girl's heart bounded as she watched them, eyes set, brows furrowed, determination, courage delineated in every line of their strong faces. Singleton was taller, but not so broad. Neither spoke.

Alan doubled himself into a vicious, animated little ball and rushed. Singleton's left flashed out and in again, but the blow did little harm. As Alan came close, the doctor's right crossed to the short ribs, and the girl winced at the sickening impact.

Then Alan uncorked. His right and then his left streaked upwards, both landing on the jaw; but Singleton had foreseen just such a move and was already leaping away when the blows landed, so that they did little harm. Once again they sparred, circling warily about each other, breathing evenly and regularly, watching, waiting, balanced cat-like on the balls of their feet.

Alan came close and the doctor jabbed again, getting away without a return, and the blood welled from Alan's nose. He shook his head angrily and waited. He catapulted in and landed a terrific right on the side of Single-

ton's head. Quick as a flash the doctor stepped in and mixed it, slamming his blows home with telling force—right, left; left, right. But this was Alan's game entirely. Toe to toe they stood there and slugged, most of their blows landing about the body—a constant, terrifying thudding.

Slowly Singleton broke ground, but Alan would not let him get away. Arms working like pistons, he followed, banging, slamming, stinging like a terrible insect. Singleton clinched desperately; but Alan tore loose by main strength and was all over his man again in a second.

Mullin's confession had fluttered from Singleton's fingers with the first blow, and lay unnoticed at the feet of the fighters.

The girl stared in silence, choking back her sobs as best she could. This, then, was the way men fought—this terrible, silent, merciless, battering onslaught. The sight of the blood sickened her; she wondered vaguely how human flesh and blood could stand the terrible blows.

Alan was fighting more openly now, while Singleton was covering cautiously. Both men had been hurt, and each breathed with difficulty. Tentatively Singleton jabbed with his left, and then, as Alan fell for the lure, he crossed with his right. Alan grunted audibly and broke ground. For a second the roof of the old warehouse swam before his eyes, and as the taller form opposite stepped in he clinched.

His arms wrapped about the lengthier, muscular ones of the doctor and the other made fierce, frantic efforts to tear loose. But Duncan held on grimly. They wrestled angrily over the floor, and then they crashed to the ground together. Immediately the grip was broken and they sprang to their feet again, watching, waiting.

Overconfident, Singleton bored in. Alan, feigning a weakness, a nausea more extreme than that which he felt, waited, apparently limp; and as Singleton came closer he was vitalized.

His right flashed across to the doctor's jaw, his left landed crushingly on the mouth, and even as the doctor's body stiffened before going limp, his right slammed to the vulnerable solar plexus.

Singleton's eyes glazed. He slid to the floor and lay still. The girl started to his side.

"O-h-h!" she wailed in terror; "you've killed him!"

Alan walked to the side of his erstwhile opponent. He felt of the man's pulse and smiled.

"No," he started; then he, too, sat down suddenly on the floor and put his hand dazedly to his head. She was beside him in an instant.

"What's the matter?" she questioned fiercely. "What's the matter, Alan, are you hurt?"

He was sick; but he answered gamely:

"Nothing much; only this bare fist business is a different proposition from five-ounce gloves, and your friend is a bully fighter."

In less than five minutes he was feeling better. One eye was closed and the other was fast darkening. His nose was swollen to nearly twice normal size and his cheek had been badly cut. Singleton, who was slowly recovering the use of his limbs, sat up gingerly.

"Listen here," snapped Duncan, "do I tie you, or will you give me your word not to try to fight or get away?"

"I'm too sick to be tied," answered the doctor dully. "Besides, it doesn't make much difference, anyway; so I'll give my word."

Curiously Alan picked up Mullin's confession.

"What's this?"

"Jim Mullin's dying confession," the girl said simply. "Give it to me."

"May I read it?" The boy's face was stern again.

"I'd rather you would not."

"Why?"

"It—it implicates your—father."

"Good God!"

Slowly Alan read, each of the damning words burning itself into his brain as though of red-hot iron. In his hand he held the paper which could send his father to the electric-chair. His eyes met those of the girl, and she sensed the battle which he was fighting with himself.

In the corner Singleton sat and smiled whimsically, grimly, cynically.

"Well?" It was the girl who spoke.

"You realize what this means?" Alan's voice was harsh—unnaturally so. He spoke as a man in a nightmare.

"Yes."

"I—I—cannot give it to you."

"It belongs to me, Alan. You would not steal?"

"To save my father from the gallows, from the death of a felon? Good God! Katherine, can't you put yourself in my position? Do you suppose that I can hand you my own father's death-warrant?"

"You must; it is mine."

"I can't, I tell you," he burst out. "It's impossible. Oh, I know you'll say that I'm not sincere; but, Katherine, this is different. I have never believed this. I couldn't think that my father—my father—God!" He covered his face with his hands and stood motionless.

Then he paced the room back and forth, back and forth. Singleton watched; not a word was said. Finally he threw up his hands with a hopeless gesture and walked to the girl's side.

"Here," he said dully, "is the paper. It belongs to you."

"Alan—I——"

"Don't talk to me," he snapped. "We're done with each other. I guess it would be just for you to bring my father to his death, even as mine—as mine—brought yours. No, damn it! I won't believe that. It's too horrible; and yet"—dully—"it's true."

The girl stared. How easy it would be to end the whole thing by burning the confession. She interpreted the battered, cynical smile which Singleton bestowed upon her. Determinedly she thrust the confession into the bosom of her torn dress. Alan turned helplessly away.

"I'm sorry, Alan."

There came a loud knocking at the door. Alan slid it back on its rollers and dropped back in amazement.

John Duncan and Andrew Nolan entered.

"We couldn't find the place," started the elder Duncan breezily, and then slowly his voice trailed off and died. "What—what's the meaning of this?" he gasped.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SINGLETON smiled with real amusement. Such dramatic episodes as this were meat and drink to him. It was characteristic of the man that for the moment he lost sight of the seriousness of his own position.

Quite unconsciously Duncan and Nolan walked side by side until they faced Alan and Katherine. Then the elder Duncan's poise came to his aid.

"Well," he asked with forced calmness, "what is the verdict?"

"Dad"—his son's voice was piteous—"why didn't you tell me before—before—I knew—I saw?"

"Tell you what, son?"

"The truth about Mr. Hemingway's death. If I had dreamed—if it hadn't been that I believed you——"

"Well?"

"Why, for God's sake, why did you lie to me?"

"'Lie' is a harsh word, son."

"This is the time for harsh words. You swore to me that you had nothing whatever to do with Mr. Hemingway's death. And you lied!"

"I told the truth, son."

"You told me a lie," repeated the boy dully.

"What makes you say that? John Duncan's face was ashen. He recoiled from each of his son's bitter attacks as from the blow of a rawhide.

"I've read Jim Mullin's confession. Katherine has it. I took it from Singleton and gave it to her."

"After you had read it?"

"Yes," he shrugged hopelessly. "What could I do? It's up to her now."

"Perhaps you were right, son; but I have told you the truth through it all. I knew that Mullin killed Mr. Hemingway; but I told you the truth. I couldn't explain before; I was afraid."

"Dad"—the boy placed his hands gently on his father's shoulders—"once before you refused to explain, and at the same time avowed your innocence. This is the time for explanations; you must tell me the truth of the affair. My dreams are shattered; my life seems wrecked through you. Maybe had you shown confidence in me in the beginning——"

"Tell him the whole story, Duncan," broke in Nolan gruffly.

"And Katherine." Duncan nodded toward the girl.

"Please," she begged.

"Very well," Duncan said quietly. "Only I'll preface my story with the bold statement that you will not believe me. However, things couldn't be any darker for me than they are now, and so I'm going to risk it. Then, after that, you can all do what you wish.

"I need not rehearse the details of my expressions at the time Number Thirty-nine was wrecked. I was worried, harassed, broken down over the strike and the wreck. Remember, please, when summing up the evidence, that I am the product of a business era; my all was tied up in the road.

"Then came my bald proposition to Hemingway, which to me at the time seemed innocent, as we didn't anticipate having the man on whom we fastened tried. We were going to discover that we had made a mistake, arrested the wrong man, and make handsome amends.

"I did threaten Hemingway; God knows I'm sorry! I spoke hastily, as I seldom do. I have been trained otherwise; and when that night I heard of his death I almost went crazy. I knew where suspicion would point, and I knew that in its ignorance of the methods of business men, and under the popular delusion that murder is a common thing in financial circles, the public would prey on me. I was slated for the penitentiary, if not the electric-chair.

"I acted, and acted quickly. I went to *The Star* and *The Record* and charged the strikers with both crimes. That was business diplomacy. Then I went to the Hemingway home, and my worst fears were confirmed. I was suspected of being an accessory to the killing. As God is my judge, every action after that was actuated by the self-preservation instinct.

"And now comes the part which I refused to tell Alan the other day, because I knew that he would not believe me. Jim Mullin has been the most notorious of our special agents. He was a hard drinker, and a man who's moral stability had been bent and broken and almost destroyed by whisky. He had been mixed up in a mighty crooked deal, and Hemingway had the goods on him. Mullin knew it, for we had warned him the very day of the wreck, and he knew that Hemingway had affidavits."

"Ah-h-h!" breathed the girl; "that explains the disordered papers in the room on——"

"What's that?"

"Nothing; go on."

"When I heard early the next morning that Mullin had been carried to St. Mary's suffering with a bullet-wound, and when I knew that there had been one fired from Hemingway's gun, I knew that Mullin was the murderer. I waited; the sword of Damocles hung suspended over my head for days, until that phone call from the hospital peremptorily ordering me there.

"I went, suspecting, fearing the inevitable. Remember, Jim Mullin hated the railroad; we had warned him that he was going to lose his job; we threatened him with the penitentiary. He had sworn to get even.

"When I reached his bedside with Nolan, Mullin gloated. He rubbed it in, and he threatened." Duncan paused and moistened his lips. "He said that if we didn't come across and take mighty good care of him and of his widow afterwards—he knew that he was dying, you see—he said that he'd confess and lay the blame on the railroad, and that he'd probably do it, anyway. Oh, I know"—as the others attempted an interruption—"that you're going to say my story is pretty flimsy. I agree with you. If I were in your places I would not believe it for an instant; but as true as there is a God in heaven, I have told the truth.

"When we left the hospital I told Nolan what has since proved true—that, no matter what we did, Mullin was going to lie toward the end and vent his spite on the road. There is no one to rebut a confession of that kind, and there was nothing for me to do. I simply had to fold my hands and wait. Tell me, Alan, would you have believed this story had I told it to you the other day when you asked?"

The boy shook his head.

"No, dad; I'm afraid I wouldn't."

"I knew it. So I fought on blindly, desperately, hoping against hope that Singleton here would prevent a dying rascal—a murderer—from confession to an infamous lie. But it's over now. My story don't hold water for a minute, and I am in your hands. I'm sorry, son, that you don't believe me. I have erred in my zeal; but as I have told you, and as I have sworn, my story of the connection with Mullin and with Hemingway's death is gospel truth. That is all."

Duncan turned away. Nolan, suddenly aged, put his arm affectionately around his old friend's shoulder. Singleton's smile had disappeared. He kicked at a nail on the floor and sent it clattering across the warehouse. The girl stood silent, motionless, fingering the confession which she now held in her hands. Alan stood with head bowed, looking at his father, then at the girl and then at his father again.

"Dad," he said quietly, "I believe your story."

The eyes of father and son met—held.

"Thank God!"

Katherine walked over to Singleton.

"Lend me a match, please," she requested quietly.

Singleton did as bidden, and she lighted it.

Without ostentation she touched the flame to the confession. Alan started forward, his eyes burning.

"What are you doing?"

She held him off.

"Keep quiet, Alan. I, too, believe your father's story."

She smiled wanly. "My sixth sense intuition maybe tells me that it is true."

Duncan's big frame shook with a dry, choked sob. The flames arose higher as the damning confession was consumed. She dropped it on the floor, bent over it, and nursed the flame until nothing remained but a tiny pile of charred paper. Then she stamped it with her foot.

"There!" She started. The door slammed back and Chief Montgomery walked into the room.

He glanced at the girl in her torn shirtwaist; at Alan and Singleton, battered and still bleeding slightly from the blows of their recent encounter; at John Duncan and Andrew Nolan, crushed, broken and resurrected as men.

"It appears," he remarked dryly, "as though I'm late. How about it, Miss Katherine?"

"Yes, you're late. There's no charge against any one here. We've been on the wrong track, Mr. Montgomery. Mr. Duncan had nothing to do with father's death."

"I know that," remarked the chief calmly.

"What?"

"Certainly; that's why I've been trying to find you. I was afraid that something bad might happen. You see, Mullin confessed everything to his wife when he was first injured, and pledged her, threatened, browbeat her into a promise to keep her mouth shut about it. He confessed that Hemingway had the goods on him for some bit of dirty work he had done, and told her that he had gone in there to steal the affidavits, which he knew Hemingway had. He had no intention of killing the man, and only fired when he found himself cornered.

"His wife was worried, harassed, especially as he had told her that he intended laying the blame for the whole thing on the railroad, knowing that his story would be believed and also knowing that he was dying. Finally, in desperation, she went to her priest, confessed, and he sent her to me. That's why I know that Mr. Duncan had nothing to do with it."

Very quietly John Duncan sat down on an old packing-case, buried his head in his hands and sobbed. Alan laid his hand gently on his father's shoulder.

"Buck up, dad," he said huskily; "let's forget it."

One by one they left the place, until only Katherine and Alan were left. They faced each other across the little pile of ashes which had been Mullin's confession.

The details of the past two weeks flitted across their minds kaleidoscopically. Then gently she slipped her hand in his. He understood.

"Take me home, Alan," she murmured; "I'm tired!"

PRACTICAL REASONS FOR HUNTING ANCESTORS

"ANCESTOR worship," as it is sometimes called, has come to be a favorite pursuit among the descendants of the older settlers of this country. Captain Eben Putnam, formerly editor of the *Genealogical Magazine*, contributes to the *Journal of Heredity* a great mass of advice on how to go about looking up your ancestors. He says it is not false pride that leads people to do this, "but a very sensible and practical desire to learn the nature and source of our various characteristics, worthy or otherwise."

Captain Putnam points out that as every individual inherits from two parents, and these parents from their parents *ad infinitum*, it is useless to draw up a genealogical tree that will mean anything, unless you can extend it to comprise at least four generations in every line of ancestry. You cannot tell from which line you inherit certain characteristics until you know at least about your eight great-grandparents, for every man is a "mosaic rather than a blend."

And he gives elaborate instructions for drawing up a genealogical tree with all the data that may be of value. He points out one fact that is generally overlooked by persons who speak and write of remote ancestry. This is that people of one class or community generally marry among themselves—yeomen among yeomen, merchants among merchants, nobles among nobles, the clergy with the daughters of clergymen, and so on. Therefore, it is not true to say that if we go back a certain number of generations we shall find that we all have a common ancestry. It is true, on the other hand, that if we go back far enough we shall find more and more of our ancestors marrying cousins.

TORNADOES AND CYCLONES.

WEATHER men define a tornado as a violent wind storm with rain or hail, thunder and lightning, in which the air masses whirl with great velocity around a central core while the whole storm travels across the country in a narrow path at high speed. The thunder and the whirling motion have given rise to two theories of the derivation of the word; as to whether it is derived from the Spanish "tronada," a thunder-storm, or from the Latin, "tornare," to turn.

A cyclone, in the definition of the Weather Bureau, is not necessarily a wind storm of great velocity, but rather a widespread storm that moves with no great speed. Its width may cover several States. This cyclone or area of low pressure—indicated as "low" on the weather map—gives conditions essential to tornadoes. Many cyclones never develop a tornado, but a tornado never develops without the cyclone, and almost invariably the tornadoes occur in the southeast quarter of the low area. About 120 cyclones pass across the United States each year, moving in a general way from west to east. They are of great benefit because they induce a movement of the surface air from the south and southeast, and the rainfall that makes the great interior valleys a rich agricultural region is dependent upon these southerly, moisture-bearing winds.

Practically all of the cyclones of the war season give rise at some time or place to thunder-storms, or hail or violent winds. These winds may be violent enough to cause destruction, but unless they have the whirling column of air they are not tornadoes. In the East it is not always easy to distinguish the funnel-shaped cloud, but the lay of the débris after a storm will tell whether there has been a twisting motion.

Tornadoes almost invariably move in an easterly direction and generally from southeast to northeast. The average length of the path of destruction is about twenty-five miles, and this path may not be continuous, if the funnel cloud is not in contact with the earth during the whole course. Sometimes it rises and goes for a considerable distance before descending again.

THE LOST CLAIM

By HELEN F. HUNTINGTON

"THERE'S not one chance in a thousand that Jack Shelton will get off alive," said Joe Harrington. "They've got the best posse of men in Colorado on his track."

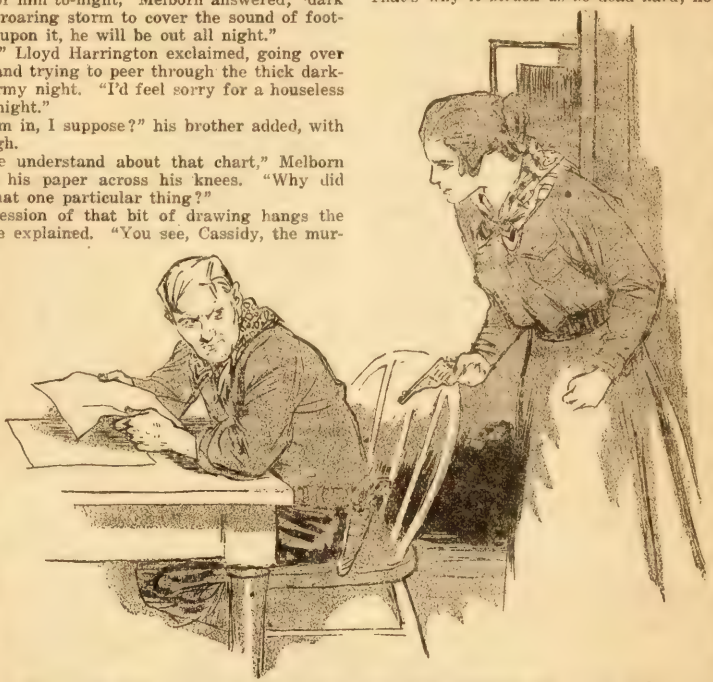
"Good time for him to-night," Melborn answered; "dark as pitch and a roaring storm to cover the sound of footsteps. Depend upon it, he will be out all night."

"Poor fellow!" Lloyd Harrington exclaimed, going over to the window and trying to peer through the thick darkness of the stormy night. "I'd feel sorry for a houseless dog on such a night."

"And take him in, I suppose?" his brother added, with a mirthless laugh.

"I don't quite understand about that chart," Melborn put in, folding his paper across his knees. "Why did Shelton want that one particular thing?"

"On the possession of that bit of drawing hangs the whole tale," Joe explained. "You see, Cassidy, the murdered man was a queer, close chap, always picking about the mountain, prospecting on his own hook. Some years ago, when he was crossing the Rockies alone on foot, he ran over a little spring bed, with a strata of gold ore showing in the rocky fissures and an indication of a rich pocket below. He had no tools, not even a rock hammer to chip off a bit, so he covered the find with rocks and fixed all the bearings carefully in his mind. It was a wild, lonely place, where a man wouldn't pass once in fifty years. When he got down to Montezuma he went to work at the first thing he came across, which was the new railroad, where he got enough money together to buy a horse and a few tools and started off poste-haste for the gold ore. He looked for that spot week after week, till the winter snows set in and blotted out everything, and he never found it. He tried it every year since that with the same result, and I guess the disappointment struck him pretty hard, for he turned out a glum, silent man, sober enough when at work, but full of queer notions. He took a fancy to Shelton from the very first—Shelton was from the East, you know—he knew things up to date and was a real, pleasant fellow, as frank and free as the best of them, never a bit of a swelled head. That's why it struck us so dead hard; he'd been with us over a year, always straight as a ramrod and open as the day."



He turned his face toward her, and saw her standing behind him, pistol in hand.

"As good a fellow as ever lived," Lloyd put in seriously. "Must have gone wrong in the upper story before he made way with Cassidy. No two ways about that, poor devil!"

"And did Cassidy find the claim, after all?" Melborn asked.

"Seems he did."

"And showed it to Shelton?"

"Shelton didn't tell us, but Peter Grindal overheard Cassidy telling Shelton about it in the poolroom down at Lonesome Crossing the very morning of the day Cassidy was found dead a mile down the gulch. Shelton pretended he was going to the Divide Station on business for father, and he stayed a good while. You see, Sheriff Wilkins met him riding off on Cassidy's horse, two miles from where Cassidy's body was found, and naturally he made arrangements to put Shelton under the law; but Shelton made a pretty big fuss there and then, and finally got the drop on Wilkins, shot his horse, and got off.

"Bad on Wilkins; the men felt like stringing him up for his stupidity. Of course, after that there wasn't the least doubt of his guilt. Shelton's been out here long enough to know that his life wasn't worth anything to the en-

raged populace, so he lit out. He had sense enough to let Cassidy's horse go, too, knowing that he'd be tracked by that coal-black filly, with white star in forehead; any child could tell it from any other horse in Colorado. Now they've got word out all over the country, and there's a mighty lean chance left that he'll get off. Levering is going to bring down his pack of prison-hounds to-morrow; they're pretty sure he's not far off yet, you know."

A young girl arose from an arm-chair before the open fireplace, where she had been pretending to read throughout the conversation.

"What a tale!" she exclaimed with ill-concealed contempt. "If I was such a good friend to Jack as you pretended to be, Joe Harrington, I'd commit suicide before I'd say half of what you have."

"Pshaw! What's a fellow going to do when he knows a thing's true?" Joe asked tersely. "It's plain as daylight that Shelton killed Cassidy for the possession of the chart."

"I don't believe it," she answered shortly, closing her book with emphasizing vigor, "and I'll never believe it as long as I live."

"That's just like a woman," her brother added with lofty scorn. "She'd say black was white to shield a fellow. You know very well that there's not the ghost of evidence in his favor."

"That's not the point; evidence or no evidence, we're Jack's friends. We know him too well to believe all those mad people say about him, and we ought to defend him instead of telling that disgraceful tale to every stranger," she said slowly, with a fleeting glance at Melborn, which was not lost upon him.

"But why, if he was not guilty, did he try to escape?" he asked blandly.

"Do you know the West, Mr. Melborn? No? I suppose not, or you wouldn't ask that question. Well, then I will tell you that if you are ever strongly suspected of a serious misdemeanor by what is called circumstantial evidence, you'd be wise to ride out of the country with all possible speed, in proportion as you value your life. Justice is very weak and small out here, Mr. Melborn."

He made no answer, but looked after her with open admiration as she passed out of the room with a rather cold "Good-night."

She was a very handsome girl of the brilliant blonde type, with golden-brown eyes, tawny hair richly shot with coppery lights, and the clear, ivory pallor of perfect health. She carried herself with the jaunty ease of a Western girl, debonair, graceful and wholly unaffected. Melborn had watched her covertly while her brothers talked, and noticed that it took a very long time for her to finish one page of the book she held before her face, by which he knew that she took more interest in the comments than she cared to show.

"Tess is stanch as a stone wall," her brother Lloyd remarked as the door closed after her. "She wouldn't give in that Jack's guilty under a thousand tortures."

"She likes him, then?" Melborn ventured with studied indifference.

"We all did. By Jove! I never thought I'd have to tell such a tale about him. I suppose, as Tess says, it's not to our credit to believe the story. But what is a man to do? There's no reasoning with a woman, if she is down on a fellow, and the same rule works the other way."

"Did the miners like Shelton also?"

"Yes; I believe every man of them liked and respected him. He had the overseeing of them, you know, and sometimes he had to give them some pretty plain talk; but they took it, by Jove, as they wouldn't even take it from father, let alone us fellows. It was a great blow to father; he doesn't believe Shelton guilty for all the damaging evidence against him. I tell you, Melborn, you'll have to walk pretty straight and keep your brains soaked to take Jack's place with father; he was as fond of him as if he'd been one of us. He had the inside track with the Harrington ranch and pretty nearly all about here. Curious how the mob will rise against a man like him."

"The case was so harrowing, you know," Melborn remarked in mild dissent. "No matter how good a person Shelton had been, they hardly let that prejudice them at such a time."

Meanwhile Tess stopped in her father's room to bid him good-night, as usual, and, when she reached her own room, locked the door after her and began hurriedly to change her house-dress for a rough riding-suit, with cloak and hood. She lit a dark-lantern, thrust a brace of pistols in her belt, and went out softly, taking the stable keys from the closet in the hall as she passed out. A gust of wind flung a great sheet of rain far into the entry as she opened the outer door and peered out into the velvet darkness of the wild night.

"Poor Jack!" she murmured, shivering involuntarily. "Oh, poor Jack!"

She closed the door and felt her way to the edge of the piazza, where suddenly a great shadowy shape loomed out of the darkness in a sheltered corner of the piazza, and thrust a wet muzzle against her cheek.

"Fury, old fellow," she called softly, running her fingers through the dog's damp, furry coat, "I need you to-night. We've got an awful job on hand, old friend. You'll stand by me through thick and thin, won't you? Now go to the stable."

The dog whined joyfully and dived out into the pelting rain; but Tess paused to accustom her eyes to the gloom, then made her way cautiously down the garden-path to the stable-door, where Fury stood scratching the boards impatiently. Once within, she drew back the lantern-slide, and, selecting bridle and a man's saddle, adjusted both on a horse which stood perfectly still under her familiar touch. This done, she led him out, locking the door behind her, and, flinging herself into the saddle, urged her horse into a sharp lope toward the open highroad.

"Fleetfoot, if you never before did a good night's work let this be the time," she said, stooping to pat the horse's neck.

She could make out dimly a sullen line of sky above the dense blackness of the forest ridge before her, but not a foot of the road over which she was passing. The dog and horse guided her, however, and she let them have the lead until she judged that they had covered about four miles, when she drew rein and dismounted on the very summit of the hill.

She turned back the lantern-slide and searched about for the lead of a trail running into the heart of the forest, and presently found it; then she threw her bridle-rein over her arm and pushed her way forward between the dripping, overhanging branches and stubby brush growth to a sharp decline, where the path gradually narrowed to a mere hand-breadth along a jagged line of boulders leading to a defile known as Roaring Gulch. With every step the foothold became more difficult; the sullen roar of rushing water in the gorge below underran the shrieking of the storm as the boom of heavy artillery adds horror to the noise and confusion of battle. Tess did not dare look behind or below her until she reached a gap in the stone walls that led to a sort of hollow basin, walled in by high cliffs, whose deep fissures formed a sluice for the turbulent stream, which rushed madly on its way to the Grand Canyon beyond.

There, thrust close under the elbow of the rocky defense,

was a tiny hovel so deeply hidden that fifty men might pass the gorge by daylight without seeing it. Tess tethered her mount to an overhanging branch and made her way to the hut-door with beating heart. A thin line of light straggling under the closed shutter told her that a human being was within, and there was little doubt in her mind that it was Jack Shelton.

She knocked softly at the door and stepped back out of the stream of rain pouring from the eaves. There was no answer; she knocked again and called out loudly:

"Open the door, Jack, won't you? It is I—Tess."

The sound of the storm and the roar of many waters drowned her voice, but the vibrations of the knocks brought the hunted man to his feet. He placed himself, gun in hand, beside the door, close against the wall, prepared to make a firm onslaught on the enemy.

"Jack!" a very faint, faraway voice called, "are you there?"

This time he heard, and opened the door with trembling haste, revealing a drenched, weary figure and a wonderfully fair, sweet face beneath the enveloping hood.

"Tess!" he cried out in amazement. "You—on such a night!"

He took her hands and drew her within, closing and bolting the door after her, while Fury leaped about him, covering him with dumb caresses, to which he paid no heed, for graver thoughts were surging tumultuously through his bewildered brain.

Tess let her wet cloak slip to the floor in a sodden heap and turned to Jack with a look in her eyes that made his heart beat madly with exultant hope. But he checked the words that arose to his lips like the foolish fellow that he was, and instead said simply:

"Oh, why did you do it, Tess?"

"Can you ask it?" she said, meeting his earnest gaze fearlessly. "To tell you that I believe in you; to save you, if possible, from these human hounds who seek your life. You must go to-night—now; there is not a moment to lose, for they are very cruel and crafty; even now they may be on your track."

"And you risked so much for me to save me, Tess. Does this mean——"

"It means that I believe in you in the face of the whole world's blame," she answered steadily. "You see, I trusted you more than you trusted me. Do you not love me, Jack?"

"Tess," he cried, growing very pale, even in the ruddy fireglow, "God knows I do! But I have no right——"

"No right? Oh, Jack," she said with a little smile that lingered in her eyes as the rose-hues tint the skies after sunset, "how little you know of love! Because I am rich and you are poor you let your pride cheat us both of our happiness. Is that love, Jack?" She put her hand on his shoulder with a little gesture of dissent. "If I did not know you to be the soul of honor, friend, would I come to you at the risk of my life and happiness to tell you what maidenly reserve should forbid? But love is stronger than fear or blame or anything in the whole world, and I love you. We are face to face with death now; we must make a fight. But the odds are against us, and if the worst should happen, remember that I loved you—will love you always."

Jack felt the world slipping away from him with a great wave of happiness. What he said to her does not concern the world at large, because it was of the joy that breaks into the heart of man who suddenly sees paradise opening from the depth of the darkness of death. He forgot his sorrows and danger, forgot everything but the one woman in the world to him.

But Tess was wiser than her lover, or perhaps she dared less than he, for she did not for an instant forget his danger.

"We must not wait, dear," she whispered, freeing herself gently from his embrace. "No, no; not a word of that wretched story. I know only that you are innocent, and that is enough. We will not rest until your good name is cleared; please God that day is not far off! Until then we must be patient. Only let me know that you are safe and I will be contented to wait for you, no matter for how long—for years, if need be. We must not linger longer, Jack. I have brought Fleetfoot for you to ride away to-night, this very hour, for to-morrow the miners will start out toward South Range, where they believe you to be hidden. You must get through Roaring Gulch as far up as the Crescent Canyon, and from there to Lessing."

They went together out into the driving storm, each thinking in their heart that it was perhaps for the last time. In spite of Tess' eagerness in urging her lover off, she clung to him in unspeakable dread when he kissed her for the last time.

"See yonder faint light in the West," Jack said hopefully. "The storm is breaking at last, and we will take that sight for an omen of good to come, shall we not?"

"Yes; God bless you and speed you safely," she murmured brokenly. "Yes; go toward the north, remember. Good-by, good-by!"

So they parted on the eve of their betrothal—he a hunted man on a race for life through the deep defiles of a rugged, wild country; she to toil wearily homeward through storm and darkness, with faithful Fury at her side.

It was close upon dawn when she crept into her father's house, weary almost to exhaustion. She replaced the stable keys in their accustomed niche behind the hall-door and went softly to her room, where she slipped out of her wet, draggled clothing, and soon fell into a deep, troubled sleep.

"You're late, Tess," Lloyd remarked the next morning, when his sister appeared at the breakfast-table, looking very pale and tired, with deep, purple shadows under her eyes. "You look all done up. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, I suppose," she answered, pouring out her coffee with obstinately, trembling hand. "I did not sleep much last night; I don't like stormy nights."

"It would have been a good thing for us if we'd all been more wakeful, I guess," Joe put in seriously. "Fleetfoot's gone, Tess—stolen in the night."

"Fleetfoot gone!" she echoed.

"Stolen, of course, and the queerest thing about it is that the stable keys were in their place this morning; there are no other keys like them in Colorado. What do you make of that?"

Tess made no answer, but looked from one to the other of her brothers, in vain hope of some solution of the difficulty, to divert their attention from her ill-concealed agitation. Her father pushed his plate aside with an air of troubled abstraction, and arose to go almost immediately.

"There's only one certain thing to count on," Joe remarked with slow emphasis; "the thief is some one who knows the house pretty well—knows where the keys are kept, and knows Fury, too. There are not half a dozen men in our employ that could come into the premises at night, without first shooting Fury, and we've got to find the thief among them."

"Could it be Shelton?" Melborn asked seriously.

Tess turned her head quickly and gave him a look of unspeakable scorn that cut him to the quick.

"It could not," she answered icily.

"Very strange," he murmured, and bent his eyes on the plate.

"Very."

"There are no tracks, as bad luck will have it; the rain

washed out everything completely, but it will take more than last night's storm to blow the thief out of danger, I'll warrant. Lucky thing they are going to have Levering's hounds up to-day."

But Levering's hounds failed to get the scent which had been completely broken by the wind and rain of the night before. The dogs ran about aimlessly for a whole day without profit, and next morning the men turned out full force with no better result. It was fully believed by all but Tess and Mr. Harrington that Jack had managed to steal the horse to aid in his escape, and the boldness of the act enraged the men to reckless desperation. But a week passed without the slightest clue to his whereabouts, and Jack's pursuers reluctantly gave up the chase for the time being, and violent excitement gave place to smoldering resentment which any mention of the man would fan into flame.

Shelton's name was never mentioned in the Harrington household, except by Melborn, who sometimes had occasion to refer to the accounts of his predecessor; but his attempt to bring up the conversation was discouraged by all the members of the family. As the months wore away, Melborn made himself very valuable to Mr. Harrington by his close attention to the business, which grew more and more complicated with the advance of mining stock in Denver. He was a quiet, gentlemanly young fellow, with good business ability and a taste for mineralogy which led him to make several experiments for his own pleasure and profit.

It was not his fault that he did not succeed so well with the miners as Shelton had, for he lacked the other man's air of frank confidence that won his way when other men equally worthy had failed. Also, he could make no headway with Tess, who treated him with chilling reserve, which could not, under the boldest stretch of imagination, be called friendly—hardly civil.

Toward summer, Melborn became restive under his close confinement, and, without apparent cause, offered his resignation. Mr. Harrington objected strenuously, setting before him the increasing stress of business and his urgent need of a reliable working head. He offered to increase his salary generously; but Melborn distinctly refused to remain under any consideration. His plea of ill health was reasonably credible, for he showed the strain of his steady work in pale, haggard looks and sunken eyes, which Mr. Harrington knew was not the result of dissipation, for Melborn was a strictly temperate moral man."

"Then there is no help for it, I suppose," Mr. Harrington said with a sigh. "I've been very much pleased with your work, Melborn. If you should ever care to come back, I'll be glad to have you; there will always be a vacancy for you here, remember. Where do you intend to go?"

"I've thought of a jaunt in the Rockies; after that perhaps California."

"Ah, yes; it will do you a world of good, and perhaps after that you'll be ready to come back to us."

"Perhaps; I'm deeply indebted to you for your kindness, Mr. Harrington. Please believe that I appreciate it."

"Yes; we are all very sorry to have you go. You've been a member of our household for six months and over, haven't you?"

"Seven months yesterday."

"Ah, yes; I remember. You came after that wretched affair. I'd give anything to know the truth of it, Melborn. That boy, Jack Shelton, couldn't have done a thing like that in cold blood. I'd risk half my fortune on his innocence."

It was oppressively hot that night, with not a breath of air stirring. Tess lay on her bed fully dressed, looking out over the moonlit hills toward Roaring Gulch, thinking of that dreadful night when she had parted with Jack beside the little hut in the heart of the lonely canyon. She knew him to be safe and well in the copper mines of Arizona; but he was not a free man in the eyes of the world, for not the slightest clue to the real criminal had as yet been discovered. Until his innocence was proven the world would still be his enemy.

Tess arose presently to go out into the cooler air of the garden, and as she passed through the hall she raised her eyes unthinkingly to the flood of light that fell from the open door of Melborn's room. He sat at a table with his back to the door, leaning over a square of paper, on which he was rapidly tracing a design. Something in his attitude attracted the girl's instant attention, and as she looked he suddenly raised a bit of creased paper and held it close to the lamplight to compare it with his own drawing, so that she saw it as plainly as if she had it in her own hand. It was much worn in the creases, and soiled from rough handling, and across the top was written in bold, irregular characters: "13 miles from Montezuma, northeast of Devil's Gap"; then followed a rough diagram, drawn zigzag from top to bottom of page, with close, careful markings to indicate landmarks, crags and watercourses. The other drawing was a perfect copy, with the writing omitted. In an instant the whole terrible truth flashed upon her, and she knew Melborn to be the murderer. The shock of discovery made her sick and faint, but her presence of mind did not for an instant desert her.

She went softly back to her room and armed herself with a brace of pistols that she had used ever since she was in short frocks, and retraced her steps cautiously, till she stood at arm's length from Melborn, where she could look over his shoulder and follow every motion of his hand. What she saw left not the shadow of doubt in her mind as to his guilt, and all the latent contempt and hatred of her strong nature leaped into fierce flame; she felt at that instant that she could have put an end to his cowardly life without one throb of compunction.

The rustle of her gown as she leaned forward caught Melborn's strained attention; he turned his face toward her, and saw her standing behind him, pistol in hand.

"Don't move," she said slowly, "or I'll fire!"

"What do you mean?" he cried, looking up at her pale, determined face and the deadly aim of her weapon. He tried to smile with an air of jaunty bravado, but his face grew deathly white, and the hand among the papers trembled visibly. "Are you mad?"

"Not so mad as you, my friend," she answered calmly. "No; don't attempt to rise. Sit perfectly still, as you value your life, for I am quite capable of putting an end to your worthless existence without a moment's hesitation. John Melborn, you have played a very risky game and almost won; but now you've dealt your last card. I have always hated you, without knowing why, but I know now. It was because you were a disguised thief and murderer! You did your work very cleverly; but the end is very near and it is not what you had planned that it should be."

She raised the other hand and fired out of the window three times in rapid succession, and almost immediately the sounds of hurried footsteps were heard overhead, and a few seconds later Joe appeared at the open door half dazed and pale with alarm.

"Don't be frightened," Tess said calmly; "nothing serious has happened, except that I have discovered Cassidy's murderer. Please step forward and take possession of that paper on the table. No, Melborn, you keep quiet. As God lives, I'll shoot you through the heart if you stir hand or foot. Stand back, Joe, or I might shoot you."

Mr. Harrington had reached the door by this time, but stopped short with amazement at the sight that met his eyes. In the moment's abstraction, Melborn thought he saw his chance of escape and made a move toward the open window, but Tess sprang before him with a little hard, defiant laugh.

"Not till Jack's name is cleared," she said. "After that you may go, if the law allows."

But the law did not allow his escape. When his guilt became known and proven beyond a doubt, popular indignation arose to fever-heat; and those who know the unspoken laws of Western retribution may guess Melborn's punishment was not delayed.

Jack Shelton came back and was received with no mean demonstrations of joy by the population of Montezuma. Every man of them did his level best to make reparation for past wrongs, over which Shelton had little time or inclination to think, for he was a free man now and the accepted lover of the cleverest and handsomest girl in Colorado.

RED INK PLANT ON TAP NOW

A MEXICAN newspaper, *El Pueblo*, states that the agent of agricultural information and propaganda in Tacambaro, State of Michoacan, has advised the Mexican Director General of Agriculture that there has recently been discovered in that section a plant known as "irguan," which produces red ink that is adaptable to various uses.

The plant is said to be found in great abundance, and the agent mentioned requested that some one be designated to make a careful study of it for the purpose of ascertaining whether it might be utilized in any of the industries and also to determine whether it might be transplanted to other climes.

ANIMAL PLANTS THAT LIVE IN THE SNOW

SNOW has both a flora and a fauna. The flora includes the tiny organisms of the seaweed family, which commonly produce the phenonemon of "red snow," not uncommon to the Polar regions and on high mountains. Large tracts of "green snow," produced by another minute plant, were found by the Charcot Antarctic expedition.

But the *Scientific American* describes also humble forms of animal life that give snow a red color. Patches of snow reddened with microscopic rotifer, or wheel-animalcule, have been found in the Alps and the Andes. M. Gain, of the Charcot expedition, found snow reddened with mites, or tiny pieces.

In Germany the term "snow worm" is applied to the larva of a beetle often found in the snow. Many species of insect are commonly found on glaciers. The most abundant of these are the springtails, which hop like miniature fleas or wriggle deftly into the cavities of the snow, but are so minute that the passer-by needs to look for them in order to see them. Snow-loving springtails are not confined to glaciers; they occur in great numbers of the surface of melting snow on bright, sunny spring days through the northern United States.

F. E. Matthes, of the United States Geological Survey, has recently described some strange worms that abound on the lower parts of the Mount Rainier glaciers. They are dark brown, slender and about an inch in length. On favorable days in July and August millions and millions of them may be found writhing on the surface of the ice, evidently breeding there and feeding on organic matter blown upon the glacier in the form of dust. "So essential to their existence," says Mr. Matthes, "is the chill of the ice that they enter several inches, and sometimes many feet, below the surface on days when the sun is particularly hot, reappearing late in the afternoon."

ROMANCE OF THE POTATO

THE potato has a checkered history, and there is quite a romance intermingled with this history, although one would scarcely look for romance in connection with the lowly potato. This common article of diet was introduced into Europe from America, and promptly became an object of suspicion in several countries. Old English commentators referred to it as the "dangerous tuber" and the "precarious exotic." In France the reputation of the potato was even worse, and there was a common belief that it put a blight on the ground where it was planted experimentally. The superstitious even thought that potatoes caused leprosy and other terrible diseases.

Whatever the Germans may have had against the potato, they considered it good food for prisoners. During the middle of the eighteenth century one Antoine Parmienter had the misfortune to be a war prisoner of the Germans on five separate occasions. Along with other French prisoners he subsisted almost wholly upon potatoes. No doubt these were badly cooked and probably of the worst grade. In any event, potatoes were heartily despised by the French captives. Parmienter, instead of complaining, became interested in the potato, and set himself to learn all that he could about its cultivation. He became convinced that the prejudice was due to lack of knowledge in the proper way to cook it and he determined to champion the cause of the humble tuber.

On escaping from the hands of the Germans a last time he returned to Paris and began to speak well of the potato. But Parmienter was laughed at. This redoubled his resolution. In spite of the most abject poverty, he studied medicine in order to better understand the potato, then obtained employment in a soldiers' hospital as apothecary. There he enlisted the interest of the chef, and they started to experiment in the way to cook potatoes. Parmienter established that the potato could be cooked most tastefully and in a variety of ways. Then it was necessary to convince other people. After several years' effort he obtained from the King permission to cultivate fifty acres of poor soil near Paris with potato plants, in order to prove that the tuber could be raised on unfruitful ground at a minimum of cost.

He succeeded, and demonstrated how pleasingly his potatoes could be cooked. The King wore a bouquet of potato buds, and crowds assembled around Parmienter's potato patch to see him at work. At nights they even stole some of the potatoes. But he was not downcast, being delighted instead.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "I have triumphed. There is no more prejudice against my poor potatoes. If there were, they would not have been stolen."

And when you eat potatoes "a la Parmienter," it is in honor of a man who persisted against all discouragement.

THE LAST NIGHT AT HOMBURG

By GASTON A. SELLIER

THE Princess Xenia Lermenteff sat in her invalid chair at the roulette-table in the very spot she had occupied every day during the season for thirty-six years. She glanced indifferently at the clock above the great entrance door of the Kursaal, and toyed with the chain of her watch. The princess was a large woman; her hair was gray and her skin waxen; she had a hawk-like nose and a pair of brilliant eyes. The eyes were all that were left to her now of the glorious beauty of her youth. In her old age a most unlovely creature and by long odds the most famous gambler in the Europe of her day. It was well known she was past seventy and that her aggregate annual losses at play exceeded the one million mark.

The hands of the clock at which she had glanced marked the hour of six; in precisely five hours then the croupier would drone out his tiresome: *"Faites le jeu; le jeu est fait; rien ne va plus,"* for the last time; the wheel would spin around and then the lights would go out and there would be no more play at Homburg.

"No more play; no more play; no more play." The words rang in her ears like the far-off yelp of the wolf she had shot with her own hand so long ago on her native steppes.

Since there was to be no more play, what was to become of her, she speculated idly? Whither was she to go, now that virtue was come into the world? Her youth, a dream gone by; most of her millions swept away by the rakes of those parchment-faced croupiers, and now the stupid German government was on the point of driving everybody into exile. She knew, as all the gambling world knew, that M. Blanc would simply transfer his *salle de jeu* from Homburg to Monte Carlo, and the great man himself had taken pains to express to the princess his hope, and the hope of *"le Direction,"* that she would honor the tables there by her presence.

"No," she had said in reply; "I have helped make the penniless Landgrave of Hesse rich. I have little left. I do not love Italians, and I shall not bestow a kopeck on the pitiful Grimaldi."

Behind her back, M. Blanc had said to madame, his wife: "The poor old princess! She thinks she can keep away from Monaco! *Ma foi*, but she deceives herself! She will be there before the month is out."

Madame hated the princess, who had snubbed her, and she hoped fervently that her husband's prediction would not come true.

After M. Blanc had left her that day, the princess took what the mercantile world calls "stock." It was now the 23d of June. On May 5th, thirty-six years before, she had come to Homburg. She remembered the journey from Rome as distinctly as though she had started forth only the day before. As the door of the Russian Embassy in the papal city closed behind her, she ran toward her carriage as though demons were at her heels. Yet the only creature behind those doors was the prince, her husband, the Ambassador, and she had left him and the brilliant world in which she had been so conspicuous, so admired a figure, to fly to a little poverty-stricken German village in the Taunus Mountains; and what for? Solely that she might indulge her insane passion for play. Twenty millions of rubles had made up the sum which had stood to her credit at her bankers' in Petrograd and Paris, when she first came to Homburg, and her landed estates in Russia had been valued at as many millions more. And now they were all gone, or nearly all. The villas she had built at Homburg in order that she might have employment when there was no gaming had been sold, and her very home was encumbered with debt. It was only at the beginning of this, the very last season, that Homburg was to know that she realized the extent of the ruin that was upon her. Yet ready money, and great quantities of it, she must have, for she was a gamester still, and the croupiers gave no credit. So she had sold her jewels—after the Demidoff collection, the finest that had ever come out of Russia, and which she had kept as long as it had been possible to keep them. The dealers had given her two million florins for them, and that had been her capitals at the beginning of the season.

This was the last day, the final *"rien ne va plus"* of the croupiers was to sound upon her ears at eleven o'clock, and then it was to be all over with, and forever. Be it so; whatever happened, she would not go to Monte Carlo, even if she were young again and had her vast fortune all in shining gold upon the table before her. She hated the Italians, but she hated Nadia worse. She could curse the Grimaldi from a distance, wherever she might be; but was it not possible to try conclusions with Nadia here and now? Five hours should be enough, and then—no more play.

The princess roused herself from her reverie. She glanced down at the green cloth before her. There wasn't a single florin there, and she was conscious for the first time that the throngs at the table and all about were regarding her curiously. She was used to being stared at, but it was many years since she had sat so long at the table without staking her gold. She looked at the clock again. Ten minutes, she noted, had gone by while she had been dreaming.

At that instant a soft, musical voice speaks to her in Russian.

"Bankrupt, princess?" it says in that tone which proclaims that pity is, in truth, the half-sister of contempt.

The princess does not betray that she has heard. Instead she raps the marble floor with her cane and on the instant her old Sacha is at her side.

"What is your will, princess?" her servant asks.

"Go to my escritoire and bring hither all the gold and notes you will find there," she directs.

"All, princess?"

"All."

She detaches the key from the chatelaine at her side, hands it to the old man and once more resumes the listless attitude she had worn.

Her keen eyes, however, have marked the progress of that other woman, Nadia, who calls herself Madame Suwarrow. She notes that Nadia is clad in yellow satin and black lace; that her hair, her neck, her corsage, her arms and her hands are covered with jewels, and that her lip

is curled with the same triumphant smile it has always worn—the smile half that of a beautiful woman who knows herself invincible, half that of the gamester who is always lucky.

What was it the gossips had been saying now for years? Ah, yes; the old princess recalls that Madame Suwarrow had won at the tables quite as much as the Princess Lermenteff had lost; that she sent most of it home, and that therefore in the long run "holy Russia" would not be a very great sufferer, after all.

What else had the gossips said of "the Suwarrow"? That it was she who had bought all of the Lermenteff jewels! The princess had paid no attention to this talk heretofore. Nadia had been for so long a time part of her daily life at Homburg that the old woman had ceased to regard her at all, just as she had for many years past given over all interest in the other regular frequenters of the Kursaal. But Nadia's insolence just now had stung the cidevant great lady to the quick. She was past seventy, it was true, and she was almost poor, but she was dangerous still, as Nadia should discover, were the luck for this one last night only with her and against her enemy.

"Bankrupt?"

Nadia should see when Sacha returned with the money for which his mistress had sent him, whether the princess were bankrupt or not.

While she is waiting for him, the princess turns her eyes toward Madame Suwarrow, who has secured a seat at the table almost directly opposite. Yes; the gems she is wearing to-night are those which had belonged to the princess. The circlet of large diamonds about her throat, with the unique emerald pendant, had been hers—a bridal gift from the Czar Nicholas I—and the aigrette of rubies in Nadia's hair, the ropes of pearls about her arms, the very rings on her fingers—all had been the Princess Xenia's, and now they flashed reproachful gleams into her eyes from the person of a woman who was nameless, save for the *nom de guerre* she had borrowed of the Suwarrow.

It was bitter as wormwood—but, stay! Here is Sacha with the treasure for which he had been dispatched. The old man deposits it all before his mistress, and assumes a rigid pose at the back of her chair.

The princess has no need to count the notes and the gold. She knew before she had sent Sacha on his errand that the sum which he would bring back with him was one million and a half of florins—all that was left of the proceeds of the sale of her jewels. The other half million had been gambled away since the beginning of the season.

So large a sum before one player instantly excited the interest of every one at the table. Its bulk was not noticeably great, for the bills were all of large denominations; but the gold, which represented about one-third of the total, made a pile which reached to the princess' chin.

Nadia Suwarrow called it the "Lermenteff breastworks," and smilingly assured her escort, the Spanish Duke of Sidonia, that she felt so sure of her own good luck that she was prepared to wager a lock of her hair against one of the duke's cigarettes that before the hour set for the closing of the game every one of those shining pieces would be her own.

The Princess Lermenteff, although continuously unfortunate at the table, was nevertheless one of the most capable of gamblers. She had lost many millions, but she boasted she had never been tricked out of a penny. She was absolutely cold. She might scatter her gold all over the table, as she had often done, but she knew exactly the location and the amount of each wager, and that of every other player, even when, as now, the table was crowded. She was absolutely sure of herself. This was to be her last play. Were fortune to be hostile, as it had been now for so many years, she would go back to Russia on the morrow with Sacha and die like a rat in its hole in some corner of the old palace on the Neva, which was hers so long at least as she might live. On the other hand, if luck were with her, she was determined to make her final success at the game memorable, both for the largeness of her winnings and the completeness of the ruin she would bring upon Nadia. In that case she might go back to Petrograd with an easy conscience.

She looked at the clock once more. The hands marked the half-hour after six. Four hours and a half remained. Well, it wasn't an eternity, but it might suffice if all turned out as she hoped.

First, however, the "limit" of the game must be removed, and she sent Sacha to the manager of the establishment to prefer her request that that might be done.

In the meantime she would see if luck were with her.

"*Faites le jeu*," drones the croupier, and long before he has mumbled the rest of his monotonous formula, the Princess Lermenteff's gold is on the table. She takes one thousand florins on the black and one hundred on Number 29; five hundred on the "odd" and two hundred on the "passe." She notes that Nadia has a thousand florins on the red and twenty florins on the "zero," with no wagers on any of the other chances of the game. Whether Nadia has been winning or losing during the time in which the princess has been waiting for Sacha she has not noted.

"*Le jeu est fait; rien ne va plus.*" The ball spins around, and after what seems to every one an irritating slowness in settling itself, at length drops dejectedly into the compartment marked twenty-nine.

"*Vingt-neuf, noir, impair et passe*," announces the banker. Before paying the winning bettors, the croupiers sweep toward themselves the stakes of the losers. Then they count out to the winners the amounts they have won. Nadia Suwarrow pouts as she sees her gold disappear from the places on which she had deposited it. The princess receives her winnings—one thousand florins on the black, thirty-five hundred on the twenty-nine, five hundred on the odd, and two hundred on the passe, with apparent apathy, but in her heart springs up the prescience which so often comes to a gamester on the threshold of good fortune.

It is a good beginning, she reflects. Ten such successful results will suffice to break the bank, and in that case, since it took less than three minutes for each "play," the game would be over in one-half hour—four hours before the official closing-time. The maximum wager permitted by the rules of the Direction was too small and the sum which made up the "bank" was paltry. If she won every wager she would have less than one hundred thousand florins, and that would be a too inglorious ending to her career. She meant to win millions, if she could. The bank should contribute its share, but even then that would be but a small return for all it had won from her. The real gold mine which she meant to deplete, if possible, was the treasure which Nadia had hidden away somewhere—either at her banker's, or in the strong-box in her apartments at her hotel in Homburg.

While the plans which are revolving in her brain are taking shape in obedience to her will, the princess has been making her second wager. This time she bets one thousand florins on the red, one hundred on Number 8, and four hundred on the "even." Nadia, a believer in zero, has placed two hundred and fifty florins on the green space which encloses that mark, and makes no other wager.

This time the ball acts with more promptness. With a

suddenness that shocks even the impassive croupiers, it plumps into the compartment marked eight, and the princess' winnings are paid over to her.

Nadia Suwarrow frowns, then shrugs her pretty shoulders and waits to see what the princess' next venture will be. She notes that she has suffered her largest stake to remain upon the red, and that she has advanced the smaller ones to the ten and the even.

"Since luck is with the Lermenteff," she whispers to the Spanish grandee at her side, "I will follow her lead." And accordingly she places amounts equal to those of the princess on the red, on the ten and on the even." The fact does not escape the princess, who instantly shifts her wagers. She removes her largest stake from the red to the black, stakes her one hundred florins on the seven, her five hundred on the odd, and a second five hundred on the passe.

Nadia would have followed this maneuver had there been time; but before she can advance her hand, the croupier has toned out *"rien ne va plus,"* and she she can only await the result.

Again the princess wins. She remains utterly impassive, arranges her gold and notes before her, and sinks back in her chair as though weary, or as if she had made up her mind to retire from the table. She is too experienced a gamester to be rash; to have won three such wagers as those which have just been decided in her favor is altogether beyond precedent; she will wait, and so she pays no heed to the croupier's invitation to place new wagers.

Madame Suwarrow, however, is impatient to retrieve her own losses. She hesitates an instant to make sure that the princess has made no wagers, and then she scatters her gold and notes in bets upon the black, the twenty-seven, and the odd, only to see them swept away by the croupiers, for this time the ball has dropped into zero.

The Princess Lermenteff notes the angry flush which is mantling Nadia's cheek. Nadia had been uniformly so fortunate in her gaming ventures that such reverses as had come upon her to-day were making her nervous. That was precisely the state in which her enemy would have her to be. As for herself, she meant to be as cold as the grave and as exacting.

For the second time the ball is sent whirling without a sign from the princess, but with Nadia's rouleaux upon the black, the eleven and the odd, zero wins again, and Nadia's agitation increases. Up to this moment her losses have been fifty thousand florins, and she proclaims the fact, like the fretful being that she is, to all those about her.

"She is a commonplace gamester, as I thought," muses the princess, "gleeful when she wins and a vixen in defeat. She is peasant-born."

Here the princess turns to receive a message from M. Blanc. After glancing at it she gives it to Sacha, who, at her direction, hands it to the chief croupier. That functionary announces, after he has mastered its contents, that the Direction has authorized him to remove the customary limit, and that accordingly bettors may wager whatever stakes they may please. The bank, for this last day, had been increased to five hundred thousand florins, exactly ten times the usual sum.

Then he returns M. Blanc's note to the Princess Lermenteff's servant and resumes his chant of *"Faites le jeu."*

The intelligence that the customary "limit" has been removed from the game of roulette at the Kursaal spreads not only throughout the establishment, with the result that the *"trente et quarante"* tables are immediately deserted, but into the hotels at Homburg as well, and presently the vast *salle de jeu* is crowded as it has not been since that memorable day, twenty years before, when the Orleans Princess lost a million.

At the table, the removal of the limit has delighted every rich gamester there, and even the humbler ones feel that they are going to see play worth seeing.

Madame Suwarrow despatches her Duke for more gold, for the loss of her fifty thousand florins has left her with only a paltry sum before her. A Genoese banker, who had been staking small sums, produces his portmonnaie, and emptying it of its contents, proceeds to place one thousand florin notes in apparently reckless profusion upon the green baize; an American millionaire followed suit, and many others, inspired by their example, throw prudence to the winds and stake much larger sums than they would have ventured, had the healthy restraint of the usual limit, permitted by the rules of the Direction, continued to prevail.

The Princess Lermenteff's first series of wagers, after the removal of the limit, amaze even the croupiers. She stakes one hundred thousand florins upon the red; one thousand upon the figure 4; and two thousand upon the "even." A number of small bettors, recalling her previous good luck, imitate her, but the millionaires, skeptical of the continuance of her good fortune, lay their wagers upon the black, the "odd," upon the zero and other numbers, so that in reality the princess' wagers, if she shall win, may easily be paid out of the losses of those who are not following her.

Ordinarily, the onlookers at the Kursaal followed the revolutions of the roulette wheel with but scant interest, but now there is a silence about the table so profound that the spinning of the ball is plainly audible everywhere.

"Was the old Russian princess a witch?" people asked one another as the croupier announced that red had won, and that the fateful ball had settled into the No. 4 compartment. One hundred and thirty-seven thousand florins is the sum total of her winnings. She arranges the great heap of notes and gold before her and glances at Nadia, who is frowning again and tapping the floor with her heel in her impatience at the tardiness of her ducal courier. Ah, he is coming now, and the beautiful woman beckons to him with her hands and her eyes to hasten.

"Faites le jeu," the croupier is saying. Nadia, in her impatience, seizes a handful of notes, hurls the bulk of them upon the black without counting them, and then places one thousand florins upon each of the numbers 1, 7 and 27. The princess makes no wagers, beyond a small one of five hundred florins upon the "zero."

"That is for you, Sacha," she says over her shoulder.

Unlike Madame Suwarrow, the princess has small faith in the zero; in the many "systems" of play which she has at her fingers' ends, that one chance is ignored, but to-night she has dismissed every "system" from her mind, and is playing the game as only it should be played, namely, with wilful disregard of every delusive mathematical probability.

The ball rolls around, and again the princess has won, and every other large bettor has lost. The seventeen thousand five hundred florins which she has won on the zero she turns over to Sacha, who receives it with the same air of profound gratitude with which he has ever received gifts from his mistress.

The notes which Madame Suwarrow had heaped upon the red are counted by the croupier, and she pales as she learns that she has lost two hundred thousand florins in addition to the three thousand which she had ventured upon the uneven numbers.

Notwithstanding the enormous winnings of the aged

princess during the brief time that has elapsed since she resumed play, the losses of the other players had sufficed the bank to more than meet them. The heaviest sufferer was, of course, Madame Suwarrow, who had not won a single wager. Past successes at the gaming table had spoiled Nadia, and in the teeth of the gale of ill luck that was at present sweeping over her, she unmasked herself. In place of the elegant woman of the world, whose manner and whose toilettes had been admired by all Homburg for ten years, she displayed a coarse little adventuress in her tantrums in public. She scolded the Duke of Sidonia; she accused the player at her elbow—a meek little Austrian tourist—of trying to filch a banknote from her, and she shouted at the croupiers that the rooms were draughty.

The cool old princess on the other side of the table noted Nadia's actions with the quiet scorn of the highly born woman whose outward calm nothing can disturb. Inwardly she rejoiced over Nadia's discomfiture, and over the evidence that her whole nature was in turmoil, because that was precisely the state in which she would have her by and by, when she would have broken the bank and seen the room emptied of every one save herself and this insolent nobody.

Of all games of chance which have been invented to plague and ruin those who play at them, roulette is the most certain and the speediest, but there are extraordinary occasions when the wheel and the marble ball act with consistent partiality toward one player—when all the other gamesters and the banker himself are but "feeders," whose gold goes to swell his or her pile. The last night at Homburg was one of these, and the invincible gamester was the Princess Lermenteff. By eight o'clock the fifteen hundred thousand florins with which she had begun had swelled to twenty-five hundred thousand. She refused invariably to permit Madame Suwarrow to make the same wagers that she made. If her enemy attempted it, the princess withdrew her own bets, and in every such case Nadia lost.

At half-past eight o'clock Madame Suwarrow was without ready money. She had borrowed of the Duke of Sidonia, after losing all that he had brought from her hotel, and had now sent him back for a second draft upon her strong-box.

There is a mocking smile upon the face of the old woman opposite her. The princess leans across the table and says, in Russian, and in precisely the same tone in which the other had addressed herself a few hours before:

"Bankrupt, Nadia?"

Madame Suwarrow is an impulsive woman, and the passion for instant play is in her blood. For answer she unclasps the necklace about her throat, and says to the princess:

"For five hundred thousand florins it is yours!"

The princess selects a bundle of five hundred one thousand florin notes from the pile before her, hands it courteously across the table, and receives the necklace which she instantly transfers to the keeping of Sacha.

Within the next fifteen minutes Nadia has lost this vast sum and the princess has won it, and over one hundred thousand florins more.

Sidonia has returned in the meantime, and the sum which he deposits before Nadia is, by a singularity of coincidence, precisely the same which Sacha had brought to the princess earlier in the evening, namely, one million and a half of florins.

Nadia said afterward that, had she taken the money and thrown it out of the window, it could not have disappeared more quickly. Almost before she realized it, every single groschen of it was gone—and all to the Princess Lermenteff.

At nine o'clock that happened for which the princess had hoped—the banker's treasury was empty and the game was declared closed.

"No," said the manager, "I shall not resume. The game was to close forever at eleven o'clock; it is now nine and the Direction has determined to quit on the instant."

In the further corners of the great chamber, the attendants are already extinguishing the lights, while others are seen to be approaching with the linen drapings with which the gaming table is covered at the end of each day's play.

The throng troops out of the Kursaal unregrettingly, for the place, though gorgeous, is after all but a gaming hell.

Many would have paid court to the successful Princess Lermenteff, but she waves them aside. Her work is not yet done. Nadia Suwarrow still has money at her bankers', and many of the Lermenteff jewels on her person. Nadia just now is a saddened little woman. The aged aristocrat in the invalid chair has won her necklace and all of her ready money, and there is no immediate prospect of winning either back. She has no disposition to leave the Kursaal so long as the princess has apparently made up her mind to remain.

Sacha, who has been sent on an errand to M. Blanc, returns, whispers to the princess, and then, at her direction, approaches Nadia. She hears him through before she speaks. Then she says:

"Your servant, princess, tells me you have purchased the roulette table, and that you are anxious to continue play with me?"

The princess nods.

"Be it so," says Nadia. "Will your highness advance one million florins upon my jewels? Yes? In that case we will begin. The million shall be the bank and the Duke of Sidonia shall be croupier. Is it agreed, princess?"

"As you have said," answers the princess. The jewels are exchanged for the money, and the ducal croupier takes his place.

The luck of the princess is true to her, and Nadia's million is soon hers. Then, Nadia, desperate little gamester that she is, gives to the princess drafts upon her bankers for over seven million florins—her entire fortune. The whole vast sum finds its way to the Russian princess, and at eleven o'clock Nadia Suwarrow is plucked clean. Before dismissing her, the triumphant princess arranges upon her aged person every one of her recovered jewels. Upon Nadia they had seemed the trappings of an actress; upon the Princess Lermenteff, gaunt and old and unlovely though she be, they look fit adornments.

Nadia and the Duke of Sidonia, who was no duke at all, but a ballet master from Madrid, disappeared from Homburg the next morning. Nadia afterward became a visitor at Monte Carlo, but she never repeated the successes of her early career at Homburg.

The Princess Xenia did not go to St. Petersburg to die, after all. She went to Paris, instead, but she never again gambled. She died rich at eighty.

Often she and the faithful Sacha chuckled over the glorious success of their last night at Homburg. She was a real princess, but she and her servant were none the less a pair of hardened old sinners. It was Sacha who had "doctored" the roulette wheel, an old trick, but his mistress' only chance, else his high-born confederate could never have won the millions which she had wagered with so much confidence.

THE TOOTH AND THE DIAMOND

By WILBUR M. VANSANT

A TALL young man entered my dental office one December afternoon, and, on being informed that I was busy, began to pace up and down the waiting-room.

I caught a glimpse of him now and then, and his restlessness so annoyed me that, when I was at liberty, I inquired what I could do for him, rather impatiently.

He did not seem to notice my brusqueness, and asked abruptly:

"Do you fill teeth?"

"Certainly."

"Will you fill mine?"

"Of course; take a seat in the chair."

As the young man leaned back and opened his mouth, I perceived that he was extremely nervous. His lips twitched and his lower jaw shifted uneasily while I made my examination.

At length I said:

"Your teeth are in good condition, with two exceptions—the lower six-year molars are badly decayed and need immediate attention."

"Yes," said he; "I am aware of that fact."

I prepared my instruments and was about to begin operating, but was interrupted by my patient asking in a low tone:

"Can you keep a secret, doctor?"

"Yes," I replied; "my patients often entrust me with such things."

"Well," he continued seriously, ignoring my levity, "never mention to anybody that I have been here till the time comes."

"All right."

"Remember, till the time comes," he repeated earnestly.

By this time I had become convinced that my visitor was decidedly lacking in his mental qualities. He seemed to read my thoughts, and said quickly:

"No, doctor; I am perfectly sane, and furthermore I haven't had a drop of liquor for over a week. You look like a man who can be trusted, and if you will do this work for me without asking questions and consent to take a merely nominal fee, one year from now you will be handsomely repaid. Will you fill both those teeth, one of them with a diamond, for two dollars?"

I burst out laughing, and said:

"My dear sir, you seem like a respectable man, but I wish you would cease talking in enigmas and come to the point. In the first place, the price you offer is ridiculously low, and besides, I don't happen to keep diamonds in stock for filling materials."

"Doubtless not, but here is one which will serve the purpose."

He fumbled in his vest-pocket and produced a diamond which sparkled with much brilliancy.

"There is the gem," he said. "It is worth $100,000 to me."

I said nothing, but smiled inwardly, for the stone, although apparently a fine one, did not seem to me to be worth over $100. My patient continued:

"Will it fit into one of those cavities and leave room for enough filling material to effectually conceal it and prevent any one but a dentist getting at it?"

"Yes," I replied; "the diamond is small, and the cavity in the left molar is quite large enough to hold it."

"The left one?"

"Yes."

"Well, go ahead and get through as soon as possible."

I am not a believer in hypnotism, but some power that I could not explain made me do as the young man wished. I excavated the cavities and sealed up the diamond. Neither of us spoke until the operation was completed. Then my patient said:

"Well, doctor, I am exceedingly obliged to you. What day is this?"

"The 17th of December."

"There are your two dollars. One year from to-day I will return, explain everything, and pay you one hundred dollars in gold, providing you will make affidavit as to what you have done."

"Very good," I said, smiling as I bowed him out.

Naturally I felt much curiosity regarding my strange patient. I thought at first that he might be a thief who had stolen the diamond. But such an idea was absurd. He looked honest enough; and then, why should he come to me—a total stranger—if such was the case?

"Will," I called.

"All right," responded my office-boy with startling quickness. "What is it, sir?"

"Follow that man," I said, pointing to my mysterious caller, who had just reached the corner, "and let me know where he goes."

"Correct," replied Will, seizing his cap, and he was off at a faster gait than I had ever known him to adopt.

He returned in about an hour and said with a rueful countenance:

"I tried hard, doctor, but he gave me the slip down on Eighth street."

"How's that? You lost sight of him, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You're a fine detective, and you took a long time to accomplish nothing," I said with as fierce a look as I could command.

The spell which the young man seemed to have cast over me lasted for several hours. I was at work in a half-hearted way, when suddenly a thought struck me like a blow. I remembered that in my abstraction I had placed the diamond in the tooth on the right side instead of the left, as I had at first intended. Both cavities had proved larger than I had anticipated. Of course, it did not really matter, but I had neglected to tell my patient concerning the change. He had gone away with the idea that the left-side molar contained his much-valued diamond.

"Oh, well," I reflected philosophically, "what difference does it make? If he comes back I can extract the diamond, and if he goes somewhere else it will serve him right for telling me a falsehood. Still, I doubt if I shall ever see man, tooth, or diamond again. I am several dollars out of pocket just because I was foolish enough to humor the whim of an eccentric individual."

About six months afterward, Joe, the successor to Will in the important position of office-boy, announced that a "pretty lady" wanted to see me. I might as well explain

just here that the precocious Will had basely deserted me some time before, taking with him as souvenirs several dollars in money, some sheets of gold and a few other articles belonging to my equipment.

My visitor had a worried look on her beautiful face.

"Are you Doctor Wilson?" she asked.

"I am."

"Do you know Mr. Albert Dawnton?"

"I have no recollection of ever meeting a gentleman by that name."

"That is strange," she continued earnestly. "He seems to know you very well, and I have come to ask you to visit him."

"Is he ill?"

"He is terribly wounded. Perhaps you read in this morning's paper of the singular assault on Washington Boulevard last night."

"No," I said; "I have not had time to look at the news."

"Well," replied the young lady earnestly, "Mr. Dawnton and I were returning from the park, and had reached a rather deserted spot, when suddenly two men sprang upon us, and while one held him the other forced open his mouth and lacerated his tongue and cheek in a most terrible manner."

"Did they not attack you?"

"No, indeed," she replied, "and it seems very strange, because I had my purse in my hand at the time, and Mr. Dawnton says he only had a dollar or two in his pocket."

"Did they take anything from him?" I asked. I was much interested in my visitor's story, but still more in herself, for she had a most charming manner.

"Well, yes; but it seems too funny to mention it. Their only weapon, it appears, was a pair of dental forceps, and with these, in a most bungling manner, they managed to pull out one of Mr. Dawnton's teeth. Then they made off at once, without giving me a chance to scream. The whole affair took place in a few seconds."

A ray of light dawned on me.

"Is Mr. Dawnton a tall man?" I asked.

"He is."

"Has he light hair and large teeth?"

"Yes."

"All right; I will go with you. I think I remember him, although I did not recognize his name."

"Will you fill both of those teeth, one of them with a diamond, for two dollars?"

I was ushered into a finely appointed room and at once recognized my mysterious patient. He was sitting in an arm-chair, and his face was well covered with bandages. He was apparently in much pain, but smiled faintly as he recognized me. A colored servant, who was in the apartment at my entrance, withdrew, and as soon as the door was closed Mr. Dawnton said faintly:

"Well, doctor, I'm in pretty bad shape."

"I see you are," I returned, "but I guess you'll pull through."

"Oh, yes," he said dolefully; "but it isn't the physical pain I mind so much. It's the loss of the diamond."

"Yes," I said, for the want of something better. I thought it best to allow him to talk, although it was with difficulty that he continued the conversation.

"I suppose you have wondered greatly why I had you to perform such a singular operation, and as everything is lost I think it best to explain the matter. My father is an exceedingly rich man, and I am his only son. Unfortunately I fell into bad habits and became a victim of drink. My father did everything to stop my downward career, and finally reduced my allowance to next to nothing. So low, however, had I fallen that I commenced to pawn everything I could lay my hands on. Without wearying you, I hasten to tell you that this deplorable state of affairs continued until my twentieth birthday. On that occasion my father had a serious talk with me, and I was informed that by the will of my grandfather I had been left one hundred thousand dollars, to be given me at my majority. There was one condition attached to the bequest. My father handed me a small diamond and stated that the jewel was to be kept on my person for one year. Should it pass out of my possession, the bequest was to be given to a charitable institution. As my father handed me the diamond, he remarked sorrowfully that he had little hope of my keeping it.

"My emotions may be imagined. Even as I took the jewel I felt the horrible desire for drink come over me. My manhood, however, asserted itself. I walked out into the open air with a terrible conflict raging within me. If I pawned the diamond I would have enough money for a month or two. But how would I ever be able to redeem it? My father, as I have intimated, gave me little or nothing, my friends all fought shy of me, and I was incapable of work. In the midst of my reverie I passed your office, and a thought seized me. I entered, and you know the rest of the story."

I listened to Mr. Dawnton's recital as he spoke with

increasing difficulty, and rejoiced that I could so soon relieve his mind. Everything was clear to me. My office-boy had evidently overheard my conversation with my mysterious patient. He had listened to our talk about the so-called $100,000 diamond, had learned the tooth into which I intended to place it, and had informed some unscrupulous friend. The conspiracy had no doubt been formed carefully, and Mr. Dawnton's movements were probably closely watched for a favorable opportunity to perform the robbery. The auspicious occasion had arrived on the previous night, and they had waylaid him and extracted the wrong tooth. I felt glad that my abstraction had served Mr. Dawnton such a good turn. Had I sealed up the diamond in the left molar, as I had informed him, my rascally office-boy's scheme would have succeeded. To make sure that my hopes were not based on false reasoning, I asked Mr. Dawnton:

"Of course, it was the tooth on the left side of the jaw that the robbers extracted?"

"Yes," he replied sorrowfully; "it was. I suppose Miss Spring has told you all about the attack?"

"She has," I replied. My spirits fell when he told me the name of his fair friend. I had hoped she would have proved to be his sister.

"She is a girl in a thousand!" exclaimed my patient with as much enthusiasm as his condition permitted. "Why, doctor, do you know since I met her a month or so back, the desire for drink has completely left me. I feel sure that I could carry the diamond about me now with perfect safety; but it is gone! I would not have my father know of this for all the world. I am at Miss Spring's residence, and her folks insist that I shall not be moved for a day or two. Can you think of any way by which the diamond might be recovered without publicity? If we call in a detective, I fear the story will leak out somehow."

"Entrust the matter to me," I said reassuringly. For some reason or other I felt inclined to prolong the conversation, probably that the joy of Mr. Dawnton might be all the greater when I told him of the lucky error which had preserved the diamond.

"Do you think there is any chance of discovering the men?" he asked. Something in my manner seemed to give him hope.

"No," I replied; "not the least."

"Then what do you mean?" he returned, with much disappointment.

"Why, my dear sir, I mean just this: You have been laboring under a false impression, and fortunately the thieves have shared it with you. I was asked to place the diamond in the tooth on the left side. By mistake I put it in the right molar, and there it is at this very moment. All the robbers have for their trouble is a large-sized tooth filled with amalgam in a very superior style, if I do say so myself."

As I made this revelation I laughed heartily and glanced at Mr. Dawnton, expecting to enjoy the look of relief that would doubtless spread over such parts of his countenance as were visible.

To my great surprise he fell back with a groan of despair.

"What's the matter now?" I exclaimed.

"You say you put the diamond in the tooth on the right side?"

"Yes."

"Why, doctor, I had that tooth extracted three months ago when I was in Cleveland, Ohio."

It was now my turn to get excited.

"You did?" was all I could say.

"Yes; I was there on a trip and it pained me so much that I had it out with gas."

"What was the name of the dentist?"

"I have forgotten, but I remember his number."

"What was it?"

Mr. Dawnton gave me the address and I took the next train for Cleveland. All my efforts were in vain, however. The dentist who extracted the tooth made a habit of throwing such results of his skill away. The dental organ with its $100,000 secret was doubtless submerged in some ash-heap.

There it remains to this day. Mr. Dawnton's expected legacy went to the Home for the Relief of Crippled Orphans, the Seminary for Training Young Men for Missionaries, and a dozen other worthy objects.

Mr. Dawnton, however, married Miss Spring, and at last accounts was living very happily, having by his good conduct regained the favor of his father.

As for me, I am, despite my unfortunate blunder, the family dentist of as charming a couple as ever lived in a New York flat.

WHEN PARIS SURRENDERED

FORTY-SEVEN years ago, January 28, 1871, the most terrible siege ever endured by a modern capital came to an end with the capitulation of Paris. For 132 days the German Army had surrounded the city, cutting off all communication with the outside world except by balloon and carrier pigeons. The great guns of the Prussians thundered in vain until famine came to their aid and Paris was forced to surrender.

The siege of Paris began September 19, 1870, when the city was completely invested by German troops. On that day the boulevards were as gay as ever, and Paris was apparently unmoved by the fate which hung over her. Within a few days, however, Parisians began to feel the pinch of hunger. All food supplies were taken over by the military authorities, and soon the city was reduced to a horseflesh diet. But fate had yet severer trials in store. When all the horses had been killed and consumed ravenous Paris slaughtered its cats and dogs. Household pets were ruthlessly killed so the capital might a little longer escape the ignominy of surrendering. Finally cats and dogs became rare delicacies, and Paris took to rat catching, and the rodents became the staple diet. With the coming of New Year's Day, 1871, the city was practically bare of food. The iron ring of the Germans grew tighter, and in Paris human beings died like flies, the victims of starvation and the ills that follow in its wake.

On the 24th of January Favre opened negotiations with Bismarck, and four days later the Prussian and French statesmen signed an armistice involving the capitulation of the city. It was not until the 1st of March, however, that the Germans made their triumphant entry.

The fall of Paris practically marked the ending of the Franco-Prussian War, although even then Gambetta sought to prolong the resistance of the untrained volunteers against the masses of the Germans who had poured into the south and west of France. Defeat in 1871 cost the French an indemnity of $1,000,000,000 and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.

The grim determination of France and the recent peace terms announced by President Wilson insure the restoration of the lost provinces when the great war ends.

THE WRONG JONES

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

"I'VE got to go up to the mine, Lou," said Joe Culpepper, as he came into the adobe kitchen after his return to town. "Blackburn says the Polestar is acting just like the Congress, and that if we make a cross-cut, we'll pick up the lead."

"So you're going up there?"

"Yes, just to set the boys to work and to watch operations for a while—a week, maybe. All of Dolly's money is in that hole in the ground."

"A good bit of yours, too, Joe."

"I can lose mine, but Dolly's going to get married, and I want to make the Polestar show up big, so that she'll have a dowry to be proud of."

"But the oranges have got to be picked, Joe, and Casey has got to attend to the irrigating and get up wood. If you go, we'll have to have some one come and help us."

"I've been thinking of that, Lou, and there's a man over at the Asylum who works out occasionally——"

"You wouldn't hire a crazy man!" gasped Mrs. Culpepper.

"He's crazy, but he's so mild no one would know it to look at him. He got upset over some love affair or other, and whenever he gets to acting queer, all that's necessary is just to shake a tin rattle at him and sing something soothing. He worked for Billings last week, and Billings says he never saw such a man for work and never had to use the rattle once."

"What will he work for?"

"He'll work for as low wages as the boys from the Indian school—fifty cents a day."

"All right, Joe," replied Mrs. Culpepper, reconciled to the situation by the low rate of wages. "You'd better have him come to-morrow. What's his name?"

"Jones—Tom Jones. I was wondering if it wouldn't be just as well not to tell Aunt Het, Dolly or Casey about his being crazy? It might make them nervous, you know, and really there's no danger at all."

"That's a good idea. I'll keep it from them."

"When is Dolly's intended coming?"

"To-morrow. Casey's going to Phœnix with the buckboard and will bring him out."

"His name is Jones, too, isn't it?"

"Yes. But what are we going to do for a rattle, Joe? We haven't got such a thing about the place, and it would be terrible if that crazy man caught us unprepared."

Joe dived into his pocket and brought out a tin rattle with a whistle in the handle.

"You see, Lou, I had this all thought out beforehand, and bought the rattle in town to-day. If he acts queer, just shake it and sing "Old Hundred," or something else that's pacifying, and he'll become as gentle as a kitten."

"I'll remember, Joe," replied Mrs. Culpepper, compressing her lips. "I guess there'll be no trouble about my managing him."

Very early the following morning Joe Culpepper departed from the ranch, and some two hours later Casey started for town in the buckboard to meet the train and bring out Dolly's "intended."

"You'll find Mr. Jones rather a bashful young man, Casey," said Mrs. Culpepper. "I never saw him, but Dolly says he's a little shy and awkward."

"Well," returned Casey, giving verbal expression to the happy thought he usually had on such occasions, "this is leap-year again, Mrs. Culpepper. Git up!" and away he drove.

As he reached the corner of the orange orchard, Aunt Het stepped out into the road.

"Casey," she said, "you're going to town after Mr. Jones, aren't you?"

"Yes'm."

"What time will you come back?"

"It'll be purty nigh noon, I reckon, Miss Penney."

"Well," went on Aunt Het, who had certain ideas of her own, coupled with a masterful way of carrying them out, "I'll meet you right here on your way back. I want to talk with the young man before he meets Dolly or Lou. Dolly's gone over to Burbanks' this morning, but of course she'll be back in high time to meet her intended."

"Certainly," returned Casey, with a grin that was but a reflex of the inward happy thought, "no doubt about that!"

He vanished down the road and Aunt Het walked thoughtfully back to the "dry-house" where she was busy dusting off the drying crates and storing them away.

Mrs. Culpepper had slipped on one of Dolly's gingham dresses that morning, and after Casey's departure, she went out and sat down in a chair under the grape arbor, and began looking over a pan of raisins. In her pocket was the tin rattle, for the man from the Asylum was momentarily expected, and Mrs. Culpepper wished to be prepared.

"Boo!"

A male voice suddenly exploded this monosyllable behind Mrs. Culpepper, and she sprang up with a haste that threatened the "seedless Sultanas" which she was holding in a pan on her lap. Turning, she found herself face to face with a young man whose gay smile gradually faded into a look of consternation, while a pallor overspread his cheeks.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered; "I thought—I thought——"

He paused and looked helplessly about him.

In his hand he carried a small basket, and his shoes and clothing were thickly covered with dust.

"Poor fellow!" thought Mrs. Culpepper, "he has walked all the way from the Asylum!" Then aloud: "Are you Mr. Jones?"

A smile lighted up the stranger's face for a moment as he answered in the affirmative and looked expectantly at Mrs. Culpepper.

"Put on your hat, Mr. Jones," said Mrs. Culpepper graciously; "you'll take cold standing here in the shade."

Jones had been holding his hat in one hand and his basket in the other, but, at Mrs. Culpepper's suggestion, and to that lady's horror, he lifted the basket and placed it on his head, smiling his thanks in an embarrassed way as he did so.

"Ah—er—Mrs. Culpepper, I presume?" he queried hesitatingly.

"He's acting queer," thought Mrs. Culpepper, drawing out the rattle; then she said, very gently, punctuating her words with an occasional rattle: "That's all right, Mr. Jones, you shan't be hurt! Here, eat some raisins."

Jones, however, did not take the raisins. An expression of horror gradually stole into his eyes, as they passed from the rattle to Mrs. Culpepper's face, and back again to the rattle. Then Mrs. Culpepper began to sing "In the Sweet Bye and Bye," and Jones looked wildly around, and finally discovered, probably from its uncomfortable feeling, that he had the basket on his head.

"I am so absent-minded," he murmured, removing the basket. "You see, I thought that you—that is, the dress you wear—ha, ha! Good joke! You see, I——"

"He's talking at random," said Mrs. Culpepper to herself. "I must get him to work at once."

"Are you hungry, Mr. Jones?"

"Not at all."

"I suppose they gave you breakfast at the Asylum before you started?"

"Beg pardon?" he returned, shuffling about uneasily.

"Don't worry," said Mrs. Culpepper, allowing the rattle to drop to her side; "it's all right. I suppose you're ready for work?"

"Work?" Jones looked puzzled; then he laughed. "I don't suppose the work will be difficult at all. You were expecting me?"

"Yes."

He looked around.

"But where—where's—"

He paused.

"I understand," replied Mrs. Culpepper with a nod; "you want to know where your work is and to get at it—very sensible, too. This way, Mr. Jones."

He followed her to the wood-pile.

"You may chop wood," went on Mrs. Culpepper, "until Casey returns from town; after that, I will give you something else to do."

For a few moments Jones bent upon Mrs. Culpepper a look of such intense amazement that she was on the point of producing the rattle again. She thought better of this, however, and went into the house, posting herself at a window from which she could watch the mildly insane individual while he was making his attack on the wood-pile.

For a brief period Jones worked manfully; then he abruptly threw down his axe, looked about him, and started cautiously for the house. What could be the meaning of this move? Mrs. Culpepper's heart was in a flutter.

As Jones stealthily entered the house. Mrs. Culpepper dodged out of sight behind a rack of freshly ironed clothes. Slowly and on tip-toe Jones passed from the kitchen into the dining-room, and from the dining-room into the parlor, casting his eyes furtively about each room as he passed through it.

Mrs. Culpepper was growing decidedly nervous; and the more nervous she became, the less capable was she of sound reasoning and sensible action. Pausing at the parlor center-table, Jones snatched up a photograph and pressed it to his lips.

"Heavens!" thought Mrs. Culpepper wildly; "he has kissed our Dolly's pic'ure! They say it was a love affair that sent him insane—oh, if Joe were only here, or Casey! Mercy on us! He's going into the linen closet! Now, what in the world——"

Mrs. Culpepper paused as a heroic determination sped through her mind. Jones stepped into the closet. Barely had he done so, when Mrs. Culpepper darted forward, pulled the door shut and turned the key.

"Now, then," she murmured, "he can harm no one, and he can't smother, because there's a window in the closet. Undoubtedly I can use the rattle as effectively from this side of the door as from the other."

Then, as Jones began pounding upon the closet door, Mrs. Culpepper shook the rattle vigorously, and sang all the soothing hymns she could think of. The effect was magical. After trying in vain to make himself heard, Jones quieted down, and no sound whatever came from the interior of the closet.

For no less than two mortal hours did Mrs. Culpepper sing and shake that tin rattle. She was interrupted by the arrival of Casey and Aunt Het.

"For the land sakes, Lou!" cried Aunt Het, throwing up her hands, "are you crazy?"

"Sh-h!" returned Mrs. Culpepper. "I've got a crazy man here in the linen closet," and thereupon she explained all about Joe's plan for hiring a man from the Asylum to help on the place; then she added abruptly: "But where is Mr. Jones, Casey? Didn't he come?"

"Huh!" cried Aunt Het; "don't you talk about *that* man to me. He isn't worth the tip of our Dolly's little finger. I met Casey down the road, bringing him out. And would you believe it, he said he was married and had six children, and didn't care a picayune for Dolly. I declare, I was so worked up that I gave him a piece of my mind, and he jumped off the wagon and ran away. Poor Dolly! How will we ever break the news to her?"

"I move that we take care of the man in the closet before we do anything else," suggested Casey, turning the key and laying his hand on the knob.

"Take the rattle, Casey," said Mrs. Culpepper, pressing it into his hand; "shake it hard and sing something soothing."

The only song Casey could think of was "Kathleen Mavourneen," and he piped a few words of the melody as he opened the door. Then his voice glided off into silence, and the rattle dropped from his hand.

"What's the matter?" gasped Aunt Het, who was standing at the dining-room door, ready to run at the first indication of trouble.

"He's gone," returned Casey. "Opened the window and got out that way."

"I swan, I never thought of his doing that!" said Mrs. Culpepper. "I suppose he's back at the Asylum by this time, and that's the end of Joe's plan for hiring cheap help."

"What's this?" cried Aunt Het, picking up a scrap of paper which had been thrust through under the closet door, and had escaped notice during the recent excitement.

"Read it, Het," said Mrs. Culpepper nervously, and Aunt Het did so.

The note ran as follows:

DEAR DOLLY—What in the world is the matter with the people in this house? Is Mrs. Culpepper crazy? If not, why does she shake a detestable rattle in my face, sing religious hymns to me, set me to chopping wood, and finally, when I come into the house, trying to find you and get an explanation, lock me up in a closet? I got into Phœnix last night, and thought I would walk over here and take you all by surprise this morning. Well, it's needless to say that the surprise is all on my side.

"Your loving HENRY."

"Mercy on us!" cried Mrs. Culpepper wildly; "what have I done?"

"Why, you've mistaken Dolly's intended for the crazy man, that's what you've done; and who knows but what you've broken off the match?"

"But he acted queer," returned Mrs. Culpepper.

"Yes—and if I remember rightly, Dolly told you he was rather bashful and awkward."

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Casey, his happy thought

getting the better of him. "You were just as bad, Miss Penney! You thought the crazy man was Miss Dolly's intended, and sent him off to the right-about."

"But how did it all happen?" queried poor Mrs. Culpepper, almost beside herself.

"That's easy enough to see, Lou. You expected the crazy man to walk over from the Asylum; instead of doing that, he came by train. And Dolly's intended, whom you expected by train, arrived in Phœnix last night and walked over this morning."

"Oh, goodness!" groaned Mrs. Culpepper. "If Joe and I had only told you all about this crazy man in the first place! Casey! Mr. Jones can't be so very far away! Run after him—bring him back! I will explain it all to him! What if Dolly should hear of this? Hurry, Casey, and——"

But just then Dolly herself came into the room, flushed and excited, and followed by no less a personage than Mr. Jones—the *right* Mr. Jones. She had fortunately met him while she was coming back from Burbanks'.

"Aunt Lou," cried Dolly, "what does all this mean? What has happened here? Am I dreaming, or——"

"No, child, you are not dreaming; it is all a mistake which can be readily explained. And here and now I beg Mr. Jones' pardon—for this *is* Mr. Jones, is it not?"

"Yes," and Dolly introduced the mystified young man to Mrs. Culpepper, Aunt Het and Casey.

Then Mrs. Culpepper explained. At first the affair was altogether too serious to be made a laughing matter, but, as the explanation drew to a close, it was evident that Mr. Jones and Casey were enjoying it hugely, and both burst into a hearty laugh, in which the others finally joined.

"Now, then, Casey," said Aunt Het, "if you will only bring back the other Jones, I feel that I shall acquit myself of this affair with very little responsibility."

"I'll find him," returned Casey, starting off, "if he's anywhere in the county."

Casey was as good as his word, and returned with Jones —the *wrong* Jones—early in the afternoon; and Mrs. Culpepper found, in course of time, that the rattle was unnecessary, after all, so far as their mildly insane hired man was concerned.

A year later, after the Polestar had proved itself a bonanza in a small way, and Dolly "Jones' " interest had mounted up into the thousands, the rattle was brought into practical use as a plaything for Dolly's baby, and Joe Culpepper never saw the youngster playing with the toy but he had some remark to make about "the wrong Jones."

OLDEST LIVING WOMAN

IN the city of Posen, in the German province of the same name, the oldest woman in the world is about to enter upon the 184th year of her life, unless death has overtaken her since the receipt of the latest news from that part of Europe. She is Frau Gretchen Dutkiewitz, and she has spent practically all her life in Posen. She was a young woman when Napoleon and his legions swept like a conflagration over Europe, and has lived to see a similar catastrophe engulf almost the entire civilized world. Frederick the Great was still alive when Frau Dutkiewitz was born, and only a few years before Voltaire had gone to his long rest. The German Empire of to-day was then an aggregation of petty, warring states, and the American Union had just been born out of the travail of revolution. Three centuries—the eighteenth, the nineteenth and the twentieth—this woman has seen, and within the compass of her life-time a new civilization has sprung up in Europe and America, a civilization now in the balance, and is being threatened by the land which gave her birth—the German Empire.

EVER-BURNING MOUNTAINS

THROUGH a long line of cliffs from Colorado to central Utah and then southwest toward Arizona, extensive beds of coal are found, and recent geological investigations into this coal formation of the Far West has developed what may be termed burning mountains, or coal-beds, a fire with surface indications of constant combustion for ages past.

Like other coal-producing States of the Rocky Mountain region, the coal fields of Utah are somewhat widely separated, and even the known fields have been comparatively little explored; therefore very little is known of their productive area. The edges of these beds come to the surface in these cliffs nearly 1,000 feet above the bordering desert, and in ages past this coal has burned into the mountain cliffs until smothered by the accumulations of ashes and covering of superincumbent rocks. In places the heat of this burning coal has been so intense as to melt the rocks. From surface appearances the fires have gone out in these cliffs, but at one point in the canyon of Prince River, where the coal is being mined, the rocks are found to be uncomfortably hot, and the miners were compelled to retire for fear the fires would again break out. Other coal fields lie in the desert west of Green River. At two places near tributaries of Fremont River the coals are burning, and have been without cessation since they were discovered by the earliest explorer. At certain intervals, as the burning of the thick beds progresses, producing cavernous spaces in the earth, the rocks cave in, forming vents for the freer circulation of air. Then the coal burns more fiercely, and the heat becomes so intense as to even melt the rocks. The origin of these fires has been the subject of much speculation. Three explanations are commonly heard among the people—the Mormons who inhabit this peculiar country where the mountains burn. One explanation is that lightning has by chance struck the edges of these coal beds at various times since these mouutains were lifted up. Another is that forest fires raging in the mountains came in contact with exposed coal. The more thoughtful point out that the forests in this desert region are too sparse for forest fires to occur. Still another and more common explanation is that the Indians built their campfires under the protecting ledges of the mountains against the coal, and it was thus ignited. They point to the fact that there are ruins of the habitations of cliff-dwellers here, and that in their day the coals began to burn. The coal miner in this region sees still another possible cause for these fires. In the dry mines, and most of them are dry, they observe that when a quantity of water is thrown upon a heap of dry coal, it spontaneously begins to burn, and, if not protected, will burn the mine. Now it can be seen that if the rocks are rent by some subterranean cause, as sometimes happens, there may be a sudden access of water to the fresh, dry coal, causing spontaneous combustion.

THE GRAVE UPON THE ALPS

By NATHALIE GEORGE

"SO monsieur has returned at last."

The man at the hotel table, eating, turned.

"Ah! Nanette, is it? Can it be?"

The girl laughed. A soft, mocking laugh, displaying the pearly teeth glistening beneath the full, red lips.

"So monsieur remembers then? He has not forgotten Nanette and his promise? And he returns—for what?"

The man moved uneasily, but went on eating, glancing furtively now and then around the dining-room. How he wished she would go.

The girl, clad in snow-white gown and cap, serene and calm, and with a majestic grace, so often found amongst the Swiss peasants — continued smoothing the cloth and moving the dishes, but with fierce eyes watching every movement of the man.

"And monsieur," she continued, with a dogged persistence, "has returned now—for what?"

The man in evident confusion said nothing.

"And the lady—the pretty little lady—with such beautiful clothes and furs, like the dolls from Paris Nanette once saw—she is—what?"

"My wife," he replied shortly.

"So!" She drew a deep breath.

"How long, Monsieur Gerald?" she asked.

He looked around uneasily.

For the life of him he could not but reply.

"Eight years."

Then with an attempt at bravado, he looked keenly at the girl and said:

"And Nanette, I suppose, is happily married, too, with plenty of family, eh?"

The girl made no reply, but her scornful looks were more eloquent than words.

The man abashed continued eating.

"And the little children," she asked presently—"how many?"

He winced, but replied: "None."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, as she pressed her hand tightly to her bosom and turned away.

Gerald Romain sighed wearily. This was a sensitive subject to him. Satiated with dove-like innocence and rustic charms he had married a little French lady, truly of the world, from the curly head to the dainty Cinderella-like feet.

And strange as it was, yet Gerald Romain, who hitherto had led a wild, buccaneer sort of existence, loved her passionately through all the years of wedded life. His only disappointment—and most strange for a man like him it should have been so bitter—was the lack of children.

With his soul well-nigh burned in the dissipations of the world, he longed in vain to settle down in some cozy corner with his beloved Madeline, and there, in a restful home, to listen to the "music of little voices, and the patter of childish feet."

The door opened. A little lady, pretty as a fairy, tripped daintily to the dining-room table.

"Ah, Gerald! Naughty boy! How hungry you must have been to eat without me! Fie! But never mind; I forgive you, for I, too, am hungry as a bear. I think it's the air."

"What does madam wish?" broke in the calm voice of the waiting girl, while she towered stately above the other.

"Ah, my good girl, bring me some of your celebrated Swiss 'tartlets,' and—anything else that's good. I'm not so particular to-day, only that you hurry. One doesn't like to sit waiting an hour, with nothing to do but take an inventory of the dishes. Eh, Gerald?"

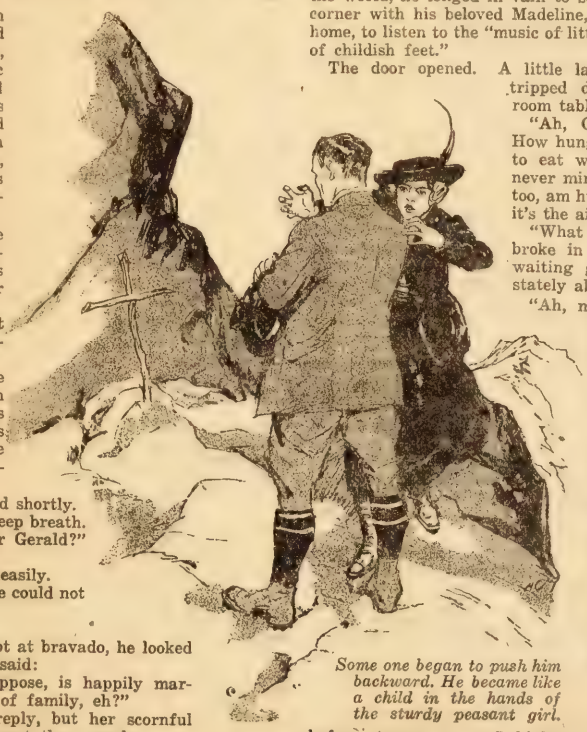
The girl, without replying, bowed, and picking up her tray, walked slowly away.

"What eyes! What a figure! How strangely she looked at you. Did you know her, Gerald?"

The man colored to his eyes.

"When I was here before—ten years ago, I think—she was only a girl of seventeen then. Her father owned this hotel, and—— Well, pshaw! it was only a little pastime." But in his heart he was saying: "What the devil did she remember him for anyway when he had forgotten—oh, so long ago?"

"Ah, Gerald, my boy," his wife laughed, as she playfully tapped his hands across the table, "take care, take care! Never, you know, play with fire. Such eyes betoken such temper. Ugh! she looks positively wicked!"



Some one began to push him backward. He became like a child in the hands of the sturdy peasant girl.

"Nonsense, Madeline! she's only a simple peasant. But, darling, do you still persist in your foolish idea of attempting to climb to the summit?"

"Silly boy! of course. Do you think I'm going back to London with 'defeat' written upon my brow? No! No! How they would all laugh. And their 'I told you sos' would be positively maddening. Besides, Gerald, there's bets on it."

"But, Madeline, it is such a fearful risk. Hundreds of attempts have been made only to end in defeat and often disaster. In fact, I believe lives have been sacrificed in the mad attempt. How then could you, delicate and used to warmth, survive the terrible cold? It would take at least three days, and you would perish the first night. I thought by bringing you here and letting you get a sight of these snow-bound mountains would suffice to freeze your adventuresome spirits. I trust so yet."

"I don't care," she said, determinedly shaking her curly head; "nothing except death shall prevent me."

How prophetic she spoke she little dreamed. He sighed wearily. He began to wish he had been more firm, and for more reasons than one refused to come at all. All through the meal Nanette came and went, unnoticed by either.

The following morning, with many misgivings on Gerald's part, a merry party set out for the Alps. Eight guides accompanied them. Among the number was Nanette. Strong, supple and fearless, no better guide was known far or near. For Nanette, from a child growing up in their midst, knew and loved the mountains.

A whole day and night had passed in climbing. The night spent by a roaring campfire, which still failed to soften the intense cold, for the Alps know neither summer nor autumn.

The morning sun had now risen, bathing the snowy peaks in a dazzling light.

The merry party of the day before sat solemn and shivering, while above them towered, seemingly as far as ever, the roof-like summit of the Alps.

"Let us give up this mad attempt. Let us turn back, Madeline," whispered Gerald, whose lips were swollen and numb. "We have seen enough."

But Madeline, delicate as a bit of china, yet had greater will-power and endurance than her tall, athletic husband.

She only smiled and shook her muffled head. He walked away a few feet, and turning a boulder which hid him from the view of his companions, gazed in awe at the grand, solemn scene before him.

A hand touched him on the shoulder. He turned quickly. It was Nanette.

"Monsieur would like to see something strange on these mountains—something new and something which concerns him—yes?" and she laughed softly.

"What do you mean?" he asked uneasily.

"Nothing very great, monsieur, only—a little cross—a little grave—which these hands dug. Monsieur will come, eh?"

The man had grown white.

He was not wholly heartless.

"Poor Nanette!" he murmured. "I never thought——"

He turned kindly to the woman, who stood watching his every motion.

"Not now, Nanette. Some—some other time."

"Monsieur will come now!" she said firmly. "No other time. Monsieur will soon go away, eh? Come back—never! Ah, Nanette is wise at last!"

"It seems so," he replied. "When I first knew you, you were as innocent as a white dove."

A foolish speech. He realized and repented it even as he spoke, for a savage flush mounted to her face, then receded, leaving a strange pallor.

"Aye, monsieur! But now—Nanette has the wisdom of a serpent!"

Involuntarily he drew back, for her voice sounded like a hiss.

"You will come now, monsieur," she continued; "it is not far. If not—well, perhaps madam and her friends will come."

"Very well," he replied hastily; "if that is all I will come."

He retraced his steps to where his wife was seated.

"Madeline," he said, "I am going to explore about a bit. I'm tired of resting. I will return soon." He hesitated a moment. Then some sudden impulse moved him; he stooped and tenderly kissed her. "Good-by, my love, my precious little flower—good-by!"

"Foolish boy!" exclaimed his wife, though she blushed in conscious pleasure. "One would think by your face, Gerald, you were going to your own funeral."

Her musical laugh tinkled in his ears as he passed out of sight. Now began a most trying journey. No stopping by the wayside with laughter and wonder. Nothing now but grim determination.

Up, up they climbed, never pausing for rest. The air was sharp and piercing, rendering speech impossible. His limbs began to swell and ache; shooting pains darted through his head, while his eyes became well-nigh blind.

But he could but follow his guide, who passed through the ordeal like a mountain sprite with no trace of physical discomfort.

She paused at last, standing amid the bleak whiteness, stern and pitiless as an avenging angel. At her feet a little mound of white rock from which protruded a wooden cross, clothed white with the virgin snow. Beyond, but a few feet away, yawned a treacherous chasm.

Above, far away and alluring as ever, the summit of the Alps.

He looked down upon the grave. He could not speak. As in a dream he heard the words:

"Your son."

Over his heart was stealing a sense of shame, of loathing for his past.

A little white flower was springing up amidst the tangle of weeds that gave promise of a fruitful blooming. The sins of his youth had never been brought so forcibly before him as now.

He was bitterly sorry. How base he was! He would make amends for his past misdeeds. He would—— A hand clutched his throat.

Some one began to push him backward—backward.

He struggled and strove in vain. Strong man though he was, he became like a child in the hands of the sturdy peasant girl, whose strength was of a maniac.

Backward he went, while inwardly he prayed for mercy.

Oh, for time! Only a little while longer! He could not die! He was not ready. He dare not meet his Maker.

In vain! in vain! His swollen limbs were bending beneath him. His head seemed ready to burst. As from afar a voice sounded in his ears:

"No other little grave shall be dug. No other tears shall wash it. No! Nanette will save—others."

The edge was reached.

With blind instinct he knew it. He put forth all his best endeavors in a last herculean effort. His foot slipped. Then—a merciful conscience left him as he went down—down to the unfathomable depths below, while above, in the stillness of that vast solitude, rang clear and piercing as a bell, the mocking laughter of a maniac.

THE RENEGADE DETECTIVE

A Serial Story

By RANDOLPH BADGER

CHAPTER THREE

THE INVESTIGATION

IN terror lest Delano Joslin would carry out his threat to deliver her husband to the police by betraying his hiding-place if she denounced him as the murderer of Arthur Desmond, whom he had robbed, Camille had been forced to protect the scoundrel. She had no time to plan or think out anything, and acted upon her first impulses to shield Ralph the best way she could. Hearing the police coming, she caught the insensible Chiquita in her arms and dragged her up to her bedroom door.

Seeing the window open, and divining that Joslin had made his escape that way, she closed it, and returned to the door only to find James Thorn standing on the threshold of the room, intently watching her.

She started back with a startled cry, and his face twitched nervously.

"What has happened here? I heard women's cries," he said quietly.

"Oh," she exclaimed wildly, "I am half-crazed!"

"Was it only occasioned by that woman fainting? The cries are still now."

"Yes, yes!" she said wildly, incoherently. "They were only alarmed at this lady fainting. Go away now with your men. There is no harm done."

"No harm? Who said there was harm?" he asked, with a piercing glance at her.

"I don't know. It is nothing. Please go away," she stammered confusedly.

"Wait," he said. "This is something rather unusual."

"To what do you refer, sir?" she asked tremulously.

"That package of five-hundred-dollar bills, protruding from your pocket."

She cried out, and instinctively shoved the torn parcel further into her pocket, where she had so carelessly thrust it that the upper torn part was disclosed.

"This money?" she said, more confusedly. "Oh, I—that is—you know—it——"

"You are confused. Wait; I will question the servants."

"No—no! It is useless!" she cried, in frantic tones.

"These actions of yours, madam, arouse my suspicions."

"Will you please go away with your men? You have no right here."

"Not yet, madam. If the presence of my men is obnoxious, I will send them downstairs."

Turning around, he issued a few short, sharp words, and the policemen disappeared.

"What do you want here?" she asked uneasily.

"I want to solve this mystery. What is the matter with this lady?"

"She fainted, as you can see."

"There was a cause for it. What was it?"

"Do not ask me. I don't know."

"Ah, well, we shall see. I perceive an open bedroom door at the end of this hall."

"It is Mr. Desmond's sleeping apartment."

"The safe door stands wide open—a significant fact!"

She could not answer, but a terrible suspicion flashed across her mind, and as she noted the peculiar look on his face while glancing at the package of money in her pocket as he said this, she could not repress a violent shudder.

How significant his looks and actions were.

She grew cold all over, and her heart almost ceased its beating.

Turning on his heel, he walked up the hall and entered the chamber of death.

She could have screamed with agony of mind, but as she remembered her husband, this weakness forsook her, and a wonderful amount of courage entered her mind. She knew she must be firm if she would save him. The detective was an unfeeling, harsh man; he was her worst enemy; he was shrewd and cunning; if she would do battle with him for her husband's sake, she realized that to do so successfully she must be upon her guard. She must meet cunning with cunning; she must be brave; she must lead him off on a false trail—secure herself. That he would make a long, careful examination of the room of death she had no doubt, and she meant to lose no time fortifying herself.

With these resolutions, her first care was to restore Chiquita to her senses; and this accomplished, she sat her in a chair.

"How do you feel now?" she asked.

"This blow. It is horrible!" gasped the Spanish woman.

"A detective is here," said Camille, watching the other closely.

"What!" was the startled reply. "Has he caught him—my husband?"

"No; Delano Joslin has escaped with my help."

"By your assistance? He is a mur——"

"Hush! Be still, on your life!"

"Camille!"

"Hearken to me. Do not betray him."

"But——"

"If you dare, I—I will kill you!"

"What means this mystery?"

"It is to my interest to protect him," said Camille rapidly.

"And why?"

"That is my secret. I have befriended you; show your gratitude."

"You have, indeed, proven a sincere friend. What can I do?"

"Ignore all that has transpired to-night, and leave the rest to me."

"It will be a cruel sacrifice, but I will do as you wish."

"A sacrifice! Did you not say Joslin is your husband?"

"He is," was the bitter reply.

"Then why not save him?" asked Camille.

"Because I have sworn to punish him for his cruelty to me."

"Has he ill-treated you?"

"Fearfully so. I cannot tell you all now; the story is too long."

"Hush! here comes the detective," whispered Camille excitedly.

"I will obey you," was the guarded reply.

"Betray my confidence, and the curse of an unhappy woman will fall on you."

At this moment the approaching footsteps drew close to the door, they heard the servants come out into the hall, and Camille busied herself about Chiquita, as if at work restoring her to consciousness, when the detective entered the room.

He fixed his keen glance upon them with a strangely troubled look on his face.

He was a man fifty years old—tall, massive, smooth-shaven, and gray-haired.

A slouched hat was in his hand, and a black chevoit suit covered him.

"A double crime has been perpetrated here to-night!" he exclaimed at length.

"A crime!" she replied in querulous tones.

"Arthur Desmond has been murdered and robbed."

"It is false!"

"We shall see. If he was not murdered, he either committed suicide, or had a fit of apoplexy, which ended his life, for he is dead."

"He was subject to apoplectic fits."

"Of that I am fully aware. But it appears he has been robbed."

"How do you know that?"

"I only surmise it. His safe has been rifled of its contents."

"Was it forced open?"

"No. It was opened with this key, which I took out of the lock."

"A key?"

"Exactly. There is a number stamped on it. This number is 2."

"No. 2!" she exclaimed involuntarily. "Why, that is my key!"

"Your key?"

"There were two keys for the safe. He had No. 1, and I No. 2."

"Did you open the safe?"

"No. I had the key in my pocket. I cannot imagine how it came in the safe."

"Rather peculiar," commented Thorn. "Was there anything valuable in the safe?"

"Mr. Desmond had one hundred thousand dollars there."

"Not a cent of this amount remains. How was the money denominated?"

"In five-hundred-dollar bills."

"And you have a package of such bills in your pocket!"

She trembled, but said nothing. All she desired was to gain time to let Joslin escape—then she would confess his crime when he could not denounce her husband.

Consequently she did not care how dark the suspicions might be aroused against her character, for she clearly saw circumstantial evidence of her guilt looming up that under different auspices would have alarmed her.

The servants now were crowding about the door, looking in inquisitively.

"What has alarmed you women?" asked Thorn, facing them abruptly.

"Oh, sir," said Mary, "we heard Miss Camille cry out, which awoke us, an' lookin' out of our rooms we seen her an' a man in the hall five minutes ago."

"A man?" queried the officer sharply.

"Yes, sir. An' first I thought it was the one wot I seen in the reception-room."

"What does this mean? A man speaking to Mrs. Desmond?"

"Yes, sir."

"The girl is mistaken," said Camille coldly.

"Oh, no, ma'am, I ain't mistaken; I'm sure I seen him."

"Can you explain this, Mrs. Desmond?"

"The girl must be dreaming," was the careless reply.

"I saw you closing that window. How came it open?"

"Presumably some one opened it."

"Of course. Excuse me. I wish to examine the shed outside."

Camille watched his inscrutable face as he passed her, methodicism of all he did. Going to the window, he opened it, drew a masked lantern from his pocket, and stepped out on the shed. They saw the rays of the bull's-eye flashed here and there, pausing, then moving about again restlessly as he walked around in the darkness. Presently he came in, pocketed his lantern, closed the window, and without saying another word he walked through the room, out into the hall, and descended the stairs.

Camille watched his inscrutable face as he passed her, but could read nothing in its immobile expression. He was gone perhaps fifteen minutes, and in that interim Camille sent the curious servants back to their rooms, commanding them to remain there until they were wanted.

When Thorn re-entered the room he was accompanied by Mary, and Patrick Brady, the groom. Closing the door, and locking it, he bade them be seated.

"I am convinced," he said at length, "that this servant girl saw a man here."

"Have I not denied it?" asked Camille, with perfect self-possession.

"We will grant that, but here is the evidence. Out on the shed I saw several drops of undried blood forming finger-marks on the edge of the roof, and these marks were too large to have been made by any one but a man. As this window is the only one opening on the shed, the man must have gone through this room, opened the window, and left it up. Searching the ground beneath the shed, I saw footprints of a man's shoe, and following them down to the river bank, they were lost. Coming back I met Brady. He told me he had seen you out amid the trees within two hours, and just after Mr. Desmond was brought home by John Rackstraw, the constable."

"Well?" she asked as he paused, and she drew nearer to Chiquita, who remained silent.

"What were you doing outside in the dark?"

"I went out to look for something I lost there to-day among the trees."

"What was it?"

"An important paper."

"But you had no light with you."

"I needed none, as John gave me some matches," she replied quickly.

"Ah!" he said, starting. "He told me he gave you some matches, but it seems strange that you went out unprovided with light in the first place, for you only met him by accident. In fact, I found several matches on the ground which you must have dropped. Only one of these matches was used, however, and Brady told me it was he who ignited it to see if it was really you whom he came in contact with in the dark."

"I did not pursue my search, as I changed my mind."

"Very likely, for I followed your footprints, and saw

that you did not stop there, else you would have left scattered marks behind, but you walked directly to the boat-house, in which you met a man, and several matches were lit."

"I met a man? You certainly are mistaken," she said, nervously.

"Proof is not wanting. The footprints of a man were plain to be seen. It was not the same man who escaped from this house to-night, though, for the size and shape of the foot were vastly different. He left here by using the boat. This I discovered by finding the oars still wet."

"I know nothing of this!" she exclaimed.

"Pardon me—you know everything! Nobody but you went with him in order to bring the boat back, as it certainly could not return of its own accord. He could not have forded the water and come out further up or down the shore, simply because the water down there is too deep, nor do I think he swam across the river or up or down the river, for the reason that the boat was not only accessible, but had been used."

"Let me prove to you that you are mistaken," she said feverishly.

"Certainly, if you can."

"Please tell me when I was down in the boat-house as you imagine."

"Shortly after Brady left you—about two hours ago."

"That was what time—about half-past nine?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, I did go to the boat-house, but I returned immediately, and, having entered the house, I have been with Chiquita ever since."

"That is a very ingenious tale, but before your friend so far commits herself as to corroborate it, I will disprove it. Let us see the soles of your shoes."

There was no avoiding it.

She drew off her gaiters.

"Soaking wet!" he exclaimed, as he examined them, "and some sand adhering to the hollow. As there is no white sand near here, you must have landed farther up the shore. The bottom of the boat contains the water that saturated your shoes. Moreover, you have only been in the house half an hour, for I and my men saw you come up from the river, and enter through an unlocked window in the reception-room. We were hidden among the trees watching the house."

She was crushed, and uttered a low moan.

"You have fabricated for some reason," he continued sternly.

"I will admit that I strove to delude you; your proof is, however, undeniable."

"Will you tell me why you did so?"

"No. It is none of your business."

"Pardon me, it is my business. You, best of any one in the world, should know me by this time, and give me a straightforward answer, for I am not one to let the least obstacle thwart me. Will I tell you who the man was you met in the boat-house?"

"Why trouble yourself?"

"Because I have certain information. It was your husband!"

This time a cry of alarm escaped her.

"It was not!" she exclaimed.

He looked at her pityingly a moment.

"Another useless denial!" he murmured. "Do you think I can be deceived? I arrested him before, and can swear to the shape of his footprint, the peculiar manner of his walk—the distance between each step."

"Have courage, dear!" whispered Chiquita to the trembling woman.

"What was it brought me here to this house to-night?" asked Thorn, who began to evince signs of some agitation as he noted the misery he was causing Camille. "I will tell you. I received private intelligence of the escape of Ralph Desmond from prison, and I knew that he would come here to see you as soon as he could. Not to catch him in a trap, which I could easily have prepared for him, I delayed coming here as long as possible. Do you know why? I will tell you," he continued, in a low, thrilling tone. "I pitied you, and wrote Arthur Desmond, his father, a letter saying I would call on him, so that if Ralph was already here, he would get timely warning to make his escape before I came! Was this not unlike my stern principled nature? Did I not thus, by proving unfaithful to party and principle, make a renegade of myself? Did I not do you justice after having caused you your first trouble? Ah! you think I am harsh—but you do not know what latent good there is in me. But now! What do I find? You—you are to all appearances—— Oh, how can I say it? But I must—a murderess!"

"I ?" she cried, in terrible tones.

"The proof against you is appalling. I must accuse you!"

"I can disprove it, when necessary."

"I hope you can; until you do, you will be under suspicion. In point of fact, if I did my duty, I would arrest you. The proof of your guilt is damnable. Arthur Desmond has died mysteriously—only you and an unknown man are seen near his open bedroom—his safe has been robbed—in your pocket is a bundle of bank-notes, evidently taken from the safe—your duplicate key was used to open the safe."

"What motive would I have for committing such a crime?"

"To all appearances, robbery."

"Bah!" she said, regaining her courage. "I am in no need of money. I have some."

"If you had or have some, it was not immediately available."

"What do you mean?"

"Consider, that if it really was your husband whom you met, he would need money, with which you would wish to supply him, to make his escape."

"That is a poor argument. Would not his father help him in that case?"

"Probably not. How does the public know that his father was not incensed against him, supposing him guilty of the crime for which he was arrested?"

"It would be inhuman. All fathers are not alike!" she exclaimed vehemently.

"Well, all I can say is that you are in great jeopardy, and I will not rest until I have discovered who the man is who was seen leaving you, by Mary, in the reception-room and was with you up here in the hall."

"If you are so sagacious," she said sneeringly, "why not follow his tracks from the window of the reception-room, and discover if he is analogous with the man in the hall?"

"I have searched," replied Thorn calmly, 'but he has left no clue to his identity."

"What do you propose doing now—arrest me on suspicion?"

He gazed at her a moment with an agonized look, and then walked to the door.

"Do not speak that way to me," he said huskily. "It breaks my heart."

"You never possessed one, or you would have shown it before arresting my husband."

At this juncture he heard a slight noise outside the door, and suddenly opened it.

Simon Jigger stood with his ear close to the keyhole; he started up when discovered.

"An eavesdropper!" exclaimed Thorn, trembling and turning pale.

"Hello!" said the startled Jigger.

"What have you heard?" demanded Thorn savagely, as he seized the other by the collar.

"What a question, to be sure! Why, I heard all you said."

"And you will utilize it?" said the detective fiercely.

"Of course," was the unabashed reply. "Here is a chance for my ambition. I can become a detective, as you confess yourself renegade, and with all of the information I have, I will unravel this mystery which you refuse to expose."

"This fellow will give me trouble!" muttered the detective, eying the other angrily.

"Let go my collar. You have no right to hold me," exclaimed Jigger.

The detective muttered something, and threw the rusty little man from him in disgust.

"I bid you good-night," he said to the others, as Jigger ran downstairs. "Beware of this man," he added cautiously to Camille, "for he will prove an aggravating enemy to you. I must now comply with all consistent with my duty. The coroner must examine the body of Arthur Desmond to ascertain the cause of his death. After that may God protect you from others, for I swear I shall do you no harm—Mrs. Desmond!"

With a last agonized look at Camille, he waved his hand and went out of the room.

CHAPTER FOUR

"HIS LIFE OR MINE!"

POLICEMEN guarded the house that night, and a few hours after daybreak the coroner came up from the city, impanelled a jury, and upon the closest examination of the body of Arthur Desmond, no proof could be found that he had been foully dealt with. He had every appearance of having died of apoplexy, and a verdict was rendered to that effect.

James Thorn was present at the inquest, morose and gloomy, and after the prescribed duty had been duly performed in accordance with the law, burial permission was given. It was at this point that the detective confessed to the coroner that he had grave doubts of the deceased having met his death in the manner of the verdict, and even went so far as to express his belief that Desmond had died of strangulation at the hands of an assassin.

The coroner gave credence to the theory, and advised him to report his belief to his superiors; but as nothing indicative of such a crime was apparent about the body, they would be safe to bury the corpse and institute a search afterward to corroborate the detective's theory of assassination.

Thorn was convinced that some man had figured in the tragedy whom Camille found to her interest to protect for some reason.

The way he came to this conclusion was by assuring himself that the package of money in her pocket contained only fifty five-hundred-dollar bills. She said that there were one hundred thousand dollars in the safe, and as all the money had disappeared, and she had only twenty-five thousand dollars in her possession when she was discovered, and the discovery had evidently taken place before she could have concealed the remaining seventy-five thousand (for he had searched the house for it unsuccessfully), he was sure that her accomplice—if indeed the man was such—had the rest of the money.

As for Camille, it was her intention to take the money and give it to her husband to enable him to escape; but, unfortunately for the project, the money was taken from her by the officer, despite her pleading, and held until the authorities finished the case. She was fearful and nervous all that day lest they would discover her husband's hiding-place. It was her intention to confess all to Thorn as soon as Ralph was safe at a distance; but as long as he was there she did not dare to utter a word, as she knew that Joslin would deliver Ralph into the hands of his enemies as soon as she got him in the clutches of the law.

Mr. Desmond was interred, and his will was read.

He left his entire fortune to Camille.

In the meantime, while her lawyer was arranging the legal affairs, she kept secluded in Brierly, and arranged a means of communicating with her husband. Having found the river unguarded, and knowing that the strictest surveillance would be kept on herself, she told Chiquita that she must carry a letter to the Red Shield tavern and deliver it to the innkeeper.

Chiquita knew nothing of Ralph being concealed there, and was somewhat mystified at the secrecy of carrying the message, but Camille did not enlighten her as to its purport. The girl was to go in the skiff by the same way in which Ralph had reached the tavern. Having prepared her letter, Camille gave it to the Spanish woman, and wrapped in a mantilla, Chiquita went down to the boat-house, rowed out on the river under cover of the night, and turning the boat's prow up the stream, she pulled in the direction of the tavern.

There was a dark form lurking on the shore watching her every movement, and as the boat went flying through the water he ran along the shore, keeping pace with it. It was a moonlit night, and objects were discernible.

When she landed, she hurried up to the inn from the water-side, and her silent pursuer followed, keeping well in the shadow of the bushes and trees.

The innkeeper unfortunately was not at home, and she gave the note to his son—a boy with a dirty face.

Her pursuer saw all that transpired and followed her back to the house.

No sooner had she left the inn when Delano Joslin emerged from a back room, and approached the boy, who was examining the letter curiously.

"Tommy," he said, with an insinuating smile, "do you know whether a lady has been here to-day to leave a letter for me?"

"A woman's been here, an' gived me this note jist now, sir," replied the boy.

"Ah! A short, dark-complexioned woman, with black eyes?"

"Yair. She tole me ter give it to my father."

"But it is for me, Tommy. Isn't my name on it?"

"I dunno, 'cause I can't read. There's somethin' writ on it."

"Let me see it. I will soon tell you if it is mine."

The boy handed the letter to Joslin, who examined the writing.

"Why, of course," he said presently, with a pleased look. "I knew it, Tommy."

"Is it yourn, sir?"

"Certainly. Here is a dollar for you, my boy, and now I will read it:

"'MY DEAREST RALPH—I am in trouble. Your father was murdered by Delano Joslin, and I detected him. He

threatened to tell the police where you are concealed if I exposed him to James Thorn, who arrived on the scene soon after the crime was perpetrated. Joslin stole the money we had prepared for you, and for a few days I will be without means. Keep up your courage, and I will soon succeed in getting you away. Almost all the evidence of the detective tends to prove that it was I who killed your father; but as soon as you are safe, I will confess Joslin's criminality, and he shall suffer for the appalling deed. The detective is neutral, and may or may not try to convict me in the meantime; but the man who helped you to reach here from prison—Simon Jigger—declared it his intention to assume the rôle of a detective, and ferret out the criminal. By so doing, he may expose you to the authorities; therefore, I pray you, in Heaven's name, not to leave your covert until I come after you myself, as your danger is great. Should you be recaptured, my heart will be broken. The details of the murder and the evidence against me are as follows' ":

Then followed all that is known to the reader, and she ended by saying she would keep him posted on all that transpired, and he could answer when Chiquita fetched the next letter, on the following day.

An imprecation escaped Joslin's lips when he concluded his perusal, but the next moment a sardonic smile overspread his features, and he muttered something to himself. Then he went out, and made his way to Brierly with quick, nervous strides. Camille met him in the parlor.

"Is this your writing?" he asked her, holding out the letter, after bowing to her.

"What! you—Delano Joslin—here?" she cried in amazement.

"You are surprised, eh? But I am safe. Who would expect to find the criminal at the very doors of the house in which his crime was committed?"

"What is this letter you show me?"

"A note which Chiquita just left at the Red Shield."

"My letter?" she cried, in astonishment and alarm.

"The same, madam," he replied, with a bow.

"Audacious rascal! Were you mean enough to take it?"

"Of course—in lieu of your scoundrelly husband," said he coolly.

"This is outrageous!" she panted.

"Ah, perhaps it was impolite, but it gives me warning to be upon my guard. You wish to hand me over to the authorities. But have a care, madam. You do so at the peril of your husband's life and liberty. I will keep my threat if I am provoked."

"How came you to get this letter? Surely Chiquita did not miscarry it!"

"I will say that she discharged her mission admirably, only that she was pursued by that mountebank, Jigger, whom I saw following her boat, by looking out the back window when she came."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, in startled tones, with an affrighted gaze.

"I had a reason for reading this letter. Ralph is no longer at the Red Shield tavern; consequently I receive his mail."

"He is no longer at the tavern?" she cried aghast.

"No; I spirited him away last night."

"Then you are his friend. You would help him?" she asked eagerly.

"Contrarily, I hate him most cordially," said Joslin, frowning.

"For what reason?" she asked, in furious tones.

"Let it suffice that my reason is ample enough."

"Explain yourself, coward."

"That is a nasty epithet, madam; but never mind, I have secured myself. Ask Chiquita for the reason of my enmity to your husband. She will tell you."

"But why," she demanded scathingly, "have you taken Ralph away?"

"To secure my own neck. So long as I have possession of him, you are at my mercy, and will not dare to reveal my crime!" he exclaimed in evil tones.

"Good heavens! Do you mean to keep me separated from him?" she cried.

"Certainly. Don't like it, eh? Well, it is fair. His life or mine, I told you. When I have consummated a plan I have on foot, I will leave this part of the world forever, and you can then have your husband. But until that time comes, rest assured, madam, that as I value my life I will keep you parted from him. You contemplated treachery, and would have betrayed me as soon as he was safe. I have outwitted you, however, and, in anticipation of some such move as this, I have worked the whole game into my own hands!"

"May Heaven help me!" she groaned, sinking into a chair, and covering her eyes with her hands. An evil look was on his face as he watched her.

"I will take my leave of you," he said, presently.

"Wait!" she cried, springing up. "Be a man! Have a heart! Take compassion on my trouble. Tell me where I can see him, at least!"

"And you'll betray me?" he said contemptuously.

"No! no! I swear to you I will say nothing," she said excitedly.

"I know the value of some women's words," he said, with a sneer.

"Ah, but you know not the fidelity, the loyalty of my nature."

"All women in my estimation are alike," he said moving toward the door.

"Try me! Do not go away—oh, do not go away without telling me anything."

"My safety, madam, lies in silence."

"You drive me to desperation. I can at least see him in prison. I shall confess all. Much better were it, perhaps, that he is again a prisoner than at the mercy of so cruel a man as you are. Yes—I will confess!"

"Dare!" he thundered, with blazing eyes, as he advanced toward her with clenched fists and a livid face. "Dare to betray me, and by the heaven above us I will kill him, and none will be the wiser! Do you hear? You reel back in terror, eh? So be it. If I will stain my hands and soul with one crime," he continued, in a low, frightful tone, as he bent his scowling face over nearer to hers, and glared with a tigerish expression that filled her with dread, into her eyes, "I will stain my soul with another!"

She saw the horrid gleam in his basilisk eyes, and a cold feeling crept over her, making her shudder with a convulsive feeling beyond description.

"You would not do such a thing!" she said faintly.

"You do not know me!"

"Then you absolutely refuse to give me any knowledge of him?"

"That is my intention. I will make one provision, however, which is this: that as long as you retain Chiquita in your employ, and prevent her doing any mischief that could harm me, I will give you and your husband the privilege of corresponding in unsealed letters, and I to be the bearer of these missives."

"I will agree to your terms because I am forced to accede."

"Very well. Again, for the present, adieu, madam. I will see you again."

He bowed low, with the same sardonic smile upon his face, and a moment later the door closed after him.

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

HOG HAS TWO TAILS

L. E. Muncer, of Clark, Mo., has a hog that weighs 15 pounds, has five legs, six feet, two tails and a double set of ribs. This hog is five months old, and healthy. Mr. Muncer has exhibited the hog at the State fairs in Iowa and Illinois.

TWO-ENDED SOCKS

A two-ended sock is one of the latest devices for military use turned out by an inventor. The top becomes the toe, or the toe the top, as desired, either end being closed by a tie of yarn. The object is to double the life of the sock by changing the wearing surface.

WOODEN SHOES

Among the current Parisian modes in footwear are wooden sabots of trim, rather surprising lines, says *Popular Mechanics*. Although necessarily an extreme fashion, their purpose fundamentally is to conserve leather much needed by the boys in the trenches.

AN ELECTRIC CAT

A cat has been in the habit of sleeping on a rubber mat under a dynamo in Cleveland's power-house. Somebody removed the mat the other day and the cat slept on an iron plate. It didn't seem to hurt the cat, but her fur became so charged with electricity that ever since it has stood stiff on end like the bristles of a hairbrush.

THE WORLD'S HEIGHT RECORD

Lieutenant Papa has beaten his own world's record for high flying with a passenger, says the *Times'* Milan correspondent. On an Italian machine he arose to 7,075 meters (23,200 feet), returning to camp after an hour and five minutes' absence. He broke the record last May, rising to 6,435 meters (21,000 feet). Lack of oxygen prevented an even higher flight this time.

SAYS DOGS WERE CHANGED

Mrs. William Lower, a resident of Defiance, Ohio, is mourning the loss of a pet canine, for which a common cur was substituted in transit by express-car from her former home in Eastern Ohio. Delays on the road occurred somewhere, and the dog did not arrive as expected. The other day the crate arrived, but instead of the right dog another of the most inferior type was in its place. Mrs. Lower refused to accept the substitute.

WARDENS TO TRAP WOLVES

The State of Michigan, through its game commissioner, John Baird, has purchased 1,000 wolf-traps to protect its deer. Deer are on the increase, and apparently wolves in the northern woods are also increasing.

Deer "yard" in big swamps found in nearly all the counties. The Vast Swamp of the Taquamanon in Chippewa County, which is fifteen miles long and ten miles wide, is said to house 5,000 deer. From now on game wardens will systematically patrol and trap wolves until spring begins.

CELLULOID SUBSTITUTE FOUND

An incombustible substitute for celluloid, which was invented by a Japanese university professor some time ago, has been found so satisfactory that a company has been organized in Japan to undertake its manufacture. *Popular Mechanics* explains that the new product is made from soybean cake, formalin being employed to produce a durble, horn-like substance. According to reports, it can be made more cheaply than ordinary celluloid, and in many other respects is preferable to the combustible product.

THE SEAL ON DOLLAR BILLS

A relic of the revolutionary days, when we were not yet a nation, still remains on our paper money, says the *Popular Science Monthly*. The seal which appears on every bill issued by the government contains the abbreviated words, "Thesaur. Amer. Septent. Sigil." The full phrase is "Thesauri Americana Septentrionalis Sigillum," which simply means "Seal of the Treasury of North America." Our distinguished ancestors felt that if a thing were to be said with dignity it had to be said in Latin.

SHOES NEED A DOSE OF OIL

When your shoes get dry or hard, you should oil or grease them, says the *Popular Science Monthly*. To do this, first brush off all mud, and then wash the shoe in warm water, drying it with a soft cloth. While the shoe is still damp, apply the grease, rubbing it in with a swab of wool, or, better still, with the palm of the hand. After treatment, the shoe should be left to dry in a warm but not hot place. Castor oil is recommended for shoes that are to be polished. For plainer footgear, fish oil or any one of the less expensive oils may be substituted.

NEWFOUNDLAND GRINDS FIRST WHEAT

The first flour ever ground in Newfoundland was recently produced from wheat grown in that colony. Newfoundland is so far north that, although wheat had been ripened occasionally in previous years under favorable conditions, it was used only for poultry feeding. Last year, under pressure for food production, some very hardy wheat seed was obtained from the northern sections of western Canada, and planted in the most fertile soil on the island. Enough of this crop ripened to justify bringing in a second-hand flour-mill from Nova Scotia, and much larger plantings are to be made this year.

CHINESE IN THE WAR

Forty battalions of Chinese engineers, comprising 40,000 officers and men, will be on the French front in May or June of this year, if the necessary transports are provided and arrangements between the French and Chinese general staffs are not held up by political developments in China, according to a statement made in New York City on February 14 by Lieutenant-Colonel Tang Tche, of the general staff of the Chinese national army. Colonel Tang arrived in New York on his way to China from France, where he conferred with military officials and inspected every sector of the French front.

KEEP BEES AND NEED NO SUGAR

The United States Department of Agriculture has started a campaign to stimulate bee-keeping. This is a real war economy measure, for honey can take the place of sugar, and there are absolutely unlimited supplies of honey in the flowers that grow wild all over the land.

Bee-keeping is very easy, and any man who goes about it carefully and with such elementary instructions as he can get from the Department of Agriculture can have a good crop of honey the first year and be able to laugh at the scarcity of sugar, besides making a profit by the sale of the product of his bees.

TO HONOR CHECKS ABROAD

The Guaranty Trust Company of New York is offering to banks throughout the country an arrangement under which their depositors, who go to France in the service of the nation, can take their checkbooks abroad and draw checks on their home banks, up to an agreed amount, and have them cashed at the Paris office of the Guaranty Trust, or at numerous correspondent offices throughout France. The depositor about to leave for foreign service under this plan needs only to obtain from his bank the proper letter of introduction in order to make his home checking account available on the other side.

BEAR HUGS MAN

A large bear is reported to be playing havoc in Northern Saskatchewan, Canada. Recently a woodsman spied the bear and began to pepper it with his 22-caliber rifle.

Undaunted, the bear made for the man, who dropped his gun and dashed for his cabin. He led the animal for several laps around the cabin, but the bear suddenly stopped and waited. The woodsman ran into the bear, sustained several broken ribs in its powerful clutch, and was tossed into a near-by well. Later the woodsman pulled himself to the surface in the bucket.

WHY HOT-WATER PIPES BURST

Householders who had to deal with frozen pipes during the recent zero weather will be interested in a French experimenter's explanation as to why hot-water pipes burst more frequently than those containing cold water. He found that hot water does not begin to solidify until its temperature has fallen to several degrees below the freezing-point, at which stage it turns to solid ice with almost explosive rapidity, shattering the pipes.

Cold water begins to congeal at freezing-point, making soft ice, full of air bubbles. The reason given is that heating rids water of gas particles and impurities which, being present in cold water, form nuclei of crystallization. The formation of ice begins sooner and is more gradual.

NEW GLASS EYE CAN MOVE AND WINK

A British army surgeon describes an improved glass eye which can move. The chief drawbacks to the ordinary glass eye are that, being simply a convex shell of glass, it tends to sink back into the socket and is fixed in a stony stare. The new device gets over these difficulties by placing in the socket of the eye a sphere of living cartilege, or gristle, taken without risk from the patient's ribs. It is all one operation.

While one surgeon removes the destroyed eye, another surgeon removes the pieces of cartilege from near the patient's breastbone. Two pieces are made into a little globe, which is placed in the socket, and the thin outer covering of the eye, the conjunctiva, is sewn over to hold it in place. The ordinary glass eye shell is inserted over this and is prevented from sinking backward. Some movement to the eye by the wearer is said to be possible.

"COTTONSEED SAUSAGE"

The United States is certainly the "land of cotton." Nowhere else in the world is cotton grown in such abundance and put to such a variety of uses. The fiber, of course, is made into cloth; the oil from the seeds is used as a good substitute for olive oil and as a basis for lard, and now the seeds themselves are being ground into flour and used for food purposes, says *Popular Science Monthly*. Gingersnaps and jumbles are made from it, and it is mixed with finely chopped meat and tied in sausage links.

To make the cottonseed sausage, three pounds of sausage meat is mixed with one pound of cottonseed flour. This flour is said to contain as much nutrition as the meat which it takes the place of, and to effect a considerable saving on each pound of sausage.

FIRST AMERICAN LEGISLATURE

The first colonial assembly to enjoy the right of initiating legislation was the Maryland Assembly, which convened in 1635, and was composed of representatives of the whole people—a purely democratic legislature. In the beginning every adult male citizen was permitted to sit in the assembly; but with the increase in population it was found necessary to limit the number, although there was still no legal restriction on the number of delegates the people might send.

Under the charter, Lord Baltimore had the power of enacting all necessary laws for the colony, "with the advice, consent and approbation of the freemen of the province." The assembly demanded the right of initiating legislation, however, and this was granted by Lord Baltimore in 1638, and the following year the assembly met and enacted the first statutes of Maryland. In their lawmaking, the pioneer Marylanders were entirely independent of the British Parliament and enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy than any other English colony.

UNITED STATES SAILORS' UNIFORMS

The seafaring man is conservative by nature, and in spite of the great changes that have come about since wood and sails gave place to steam and iron, many old customs and traditions have left their trace on the uniform of American sailors of the present day. The wide, flaring trousers suggest a waste of material when seen on a city street, but they are really the most practical shape for duty on shipboard. Because of the looseness they may be rolled up snugly to the knee when the sailor is holystoning the decks, and the flare also prevents them from binding at the knees when the bluejacket is climbing the shrouds. Another important advantage of the looseness is that, combined with the arrangement of the buttons on the side, the trousers may be easily slipped off in the water.

One explanation of the three white stripes bordering the collar is that they commemorate three great English naval victories—the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, in which the Spaniards again were defeated, and the battle of the Nile, where, in 1798 the British and French fleets came to grips.

The black tie, prescribed by regulations for our bluejackets, apparently was handed down to us by the British navy. It was worn by the sailors of his fleet in memory of Nelson after the death of the great naval hero.

The bit of white undershirt showing at the neck is associated with a famous American leader, Admiral Farragut. After his death the sail in which his body was lowered to the water was divided among his sailors, with the request that the pieces be worn across their chests. This established the custom of wearing a white dickey, which is now replaced by the portion of the undershirt.

FLYING IN CLOUDS

The most unpleasant situation in which an airman can find himself is to be at a considerable height and the view in all directions cut off by clouds. There is no fixed point visible, and he can only tell if he is flying straight by his compass and air speed. If the wind be "bumpy," the compass cards begin to move, and only the most delicate steering will get it back to a steady position.

Captain B. C. Hucks, of the Royal Flying Corps, says he has found it almost impossible to get the compass steady in a cloud, according to the Pittsburg *Press*. The airplane has already begun to turn and the pilot is almost certain to over correct. Then the nose cannot tell whether the machine is taking a nose dive, is spiraling downward, or merely gliding a bit too rapidly.

If a stable machine be let alone under these conditions it will right itself eventually and glide normally. But few pilots have nerve enough to let it alone, and they are liable to try to pull out too suddenly, which means disaster.

Captain Hucks told the Aeronautical Society in London that a machine which will show a constant vertical or horizontal line and be independent of centrifugal force was badly needed.

PREHISTORIC WEAPONS OF METEORIC METAL

In the Old World the art of smelting ores was discovered about 1200 B. C. It has sometimes been suggested that iron tools and weaponus may have been made at an earlier period from meteorites, and recently a considerable amount of evidence in behalf of this hypothesis has been presented by C. F. Zimmer.

He has compiled a list of the known iron-containing meteorites, nearly all accumulated within the past century, and he shows from these alone about 250 tons of iron might be obtained. Of this amount more than 99 per cent. is malleable, consisting of a nickel-iron alloy. He also shows by means of a series of illustrations how easy it is to detach from the meteorites fragments of iron suitable for use as tools or implements when mounted in handles.

Thus it seems fairly probable that widespread use may have been made of meteoritic iron in prehistoric times. At the time of the Spanish conquest of the Mexico, the Aztecs had iron knives and daggers, which, they declared, had been obtained from the sky. Moreover, the use of meteoritic iron by Esquimaux and American Indians is a matter of recent history.

NUTS A MILLION YEARS OLD

There were boys in this country one million years ago. The United States Geological Survey so states officially. That is, it states that there were hickory nuts here one million years ago, and what would hickory nuts have been doing here without boys?

It seems that the government department has unearthed the nuts in the Gulf States, not petrified affairs, nor impressions in the shale or mud or stone, but the real thing —hickory nuts that are sound and good at this late date, after one million years spent in the stagnant mud and water and stone formations that preserved them.

In speaking of the discovery, the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* says that, although the leaves themselves have rotted and gone, here and there some were buried in soft clay by sediment in such a way as to leave perfectly preserved impressions. The nuts, on the other hand, neither decayed nor petrified, but fell into pools of stagnant water, which is one of the best preservatives in nature, and sooner or later were also buried under silt and clay. Owing to their hard coats, those which fell into places favorable to their preservation are to-day in excellent condition.

THINGS IN SCIENCE

A ring to be worn on one finger by a person knitting regulates the tension of the material used.

A stretcher that can be folded and carried in a knapsack has been invented by a Swiss army surgeon.

A restaurant-chair has been invented with a spring-controlled shelf under the seat to hold a man's hat.

Compressed peat, formed into sheets, has been invented in Europe for insulation against heat and cold.

A Frenchman is the inventor of an electric clock that runs without attention as long as its battery is in good condition.

The world's most northerly railway, in Norway and Sweden, runs to a point 130 miles above the Arctic circle.

A paper-box that fits a kitchen sink-strainer has been patented to receive garbage and facilitate its removal.

A thoroughly waterproof telephone cable that weighs only seven pounds to the mile has been invented in England.

Extra seats carried over the running-boards of a new automobile slide out of sight like drawers when not in use.

A Russian inventor claims to have perfected a motor that can safely utilize electricity drawn from storm clouds.

PLANTS THAT GROW IN BOOKS

We have all heard of the worms that live in books and do so much damage, but until recently it was not known that books also have plants which thrive inside their covers. As a French scientist has discovered, most books show traces of plant life on their leaves and in some cases this life is considerable enough to constitute a veritable miniature botanical garden.

The plant life in books shows itself in the form of tiny yellowish, black or reddish spots, which we so often see on the pages of both new and old volumes. The plants are nothing more or less than a low form of mushrooms which sometimes envelop themselves with a protective covering and, when mashed by pressure of the sides of the books, secrete the colored liquid which spreads through the page, says the *Minneapolis Tribune*.

The necessity for finding out the cause of these discolorations was an urgent one. Paper manufacturers have long been complaining that even the highest grade of paper would often show spots after having been incorporated into a valuable book. After a short time the colored spots would spread on the leaves and greatly reduce the intrinsic value of the volume.

Dr. Pierre See has not only proved that these spots are plant formations, but he has even been able to transplant them and make them grow so that they can be distinguished as common forms of fungus.

In making his researches, Dr. See became a new kind of gardener, systematically cultivating the fungi which caused the paper spots. He wanted to have the material in which he raised these plants as free from bacteria as possible, so that only the plants which he introduced would be the ones to grow. He utilized carrots, potatoes, licorice, paper, wood and many other things on which to raise these plants in miniature hothouses. The most successful growths were obtained on licorice roots.

First, he thoroughly sterilized the licorice and the glass covering. When the glass covering became cool again he placed a fragment from the center of one of the spots found in books on the licorice with a sterilized platinum rod. He then sealed the bottle.

The plant developed rapidly until at the end of six weeks it completely covered the licorice. Then it was a simple matter for botanists to identify it and to set about ways to prevent its getting a foothold in the paper used in books and stationery.

WHY WE STOP GROWING

We eventually stop growing because certain of the cells of the body lose their ability of increasing in size and producing other cells. It is one of the marvels of the construction of the human body that this is so, and one of the wisest provisions also. At first the cells of the body crave lots of food and increase in size, divide, and then the parts go on growing until they become of a certain size, when they again divide, and each part goes on growing, etc., and thus we grow. A growing boy needs more food than a mature man, because he needs some of it to grow with, while the man only has to keep what growth he has going, i. e., alive, says the *Book of Wonders.*

We say this limit of growth is a wise provision of nature, because if there were no limit to the size we might become, we would not know how large to build houses, barns, etc., or else we would have to build them so large to start with that we would be lost in them for a long time. We would constantly be forced to change these things, and there would be no basis to reckon from. Dogs might be as big as elephants, and then they would be of no use to us, for of what use would a dog as big as an elephant be to a boy of five years? You see, it would not do at all to have this rule changed.

AVIATORS USE DICTAGRAPH

Heretofore the training of men for the flying corps and their work on the battlefield has been hampered through lack of adequate means of communication between the pilot and observer, thereby necessitating them to return to the ground before they could give any detailed or elaborate direction to one another or make changes in their plans. The dictagraph principle is now used.

This new system consists of a special head-gear, which is strapped over the regular helmet. In the back of the same is set a dictagraph, so that it is always in the vertical position; from this a tube leads to a specially constructed mouthpiece, to be strapped in place over the mouth, says the *Electrical Experimenter.*

A stop-cock regulates the sonority of the voice, which is allowed to reach the dictagraph; a special cable is run between the two seats, and to which both operators attach their plugs. It is believed that this method will supersede all previous efforts in this line. Those who have never been up in a flying machine of modern type, which speeds along at a velocity of 60 to 120 miles per hour at times, have no real conception of the physical action on the aviator. His face is often distorted by the terrific air pressure, his cheeks are pushed inward until they are hollow. And oftentimes he can just barely speak, owing to the severe cold, which fairly petrifies the skin and flesh. This condition was mentioned to the writer by a member of the Royal Flying Corps of Canada.

X-RAYS IN WAR

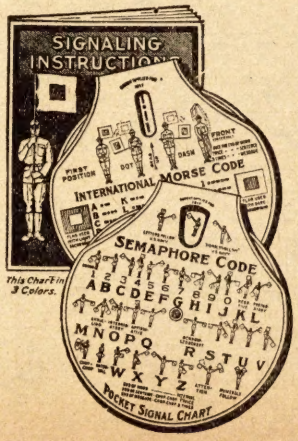
X-rays are playing an important part in the world war, and to them is due in large measure the low percentage of fatalities among the casualties in present-day battles. Roentgen's discovery, to which is credited a long list of triumphs in re-establishing shattered and mutilated humanity among soldiers, was in danger of being of little help to the Allies when the war began, as Germans had a monopoly of the manufacture of the glass used in making the bulbs necessary for the projection of the rays. The drawback has been overcome by the ingenuity and energy of American, British and French scientists and workmen.

Use of the X-rays begins in the cases of many soldiers at the time they enter the service. Slackers learn to fear the mystifying light, as alleged ailments and disabilities disappear under its rays.

A disabled soldier entering a hospital has generally a picture taken of his wound the first thing. The source of his pains is revealed by the rays in every stage. If a foreign substance is in the eyeball the location is settled to the hundredth of an inch. Incipient tuberculosis and internal diseases are diagnosed. Throat and digestive troubles are traced back to septic poisoning by decayed teeth, when a dental radiologist is in charge of the projection.

THE FRENCH FIELD GUN

German artillerymen have not been able, in spite of all their efforts, to invent a field gun which in any way approaches the French field gun in accuracy of aim or rapidity of fire, writes the Associated Press correspondent at the French front. Since the beginning of the war, however, they have greatly improved the 3-inch gun, and have increased its range by extending the length of the tube and fixing it on a 4-inch howitzer gun-carriage, which gives it an extreme carrying distance of nearly six miles. Its most effective range is still only between two and a half and three and three-quarters miles. In making these improvements the German gunners have decreased the efficiency of the field gun at the shorter ranges, since the longer barrel causes the piece to heat more rapidly than the old model did and thus prevents the battery from maintaining quick fire for more than a short period. The shells fired by these guns are of five varieties, each battery being furnished with supplies of all of them for use according to circumstances. The various shells are: The long explosive concussion shell; the long explosive shell with an instantaneous fuse formed of an aluminum bar an inch and a half in length, which is inserted in the end of the projectile just before it is fired and causes the shell to burst at the slightest contact; the ordinary short shell with a delayed time fuse; the ordinary short explosive time-fuse shell; the shrapnel shell. The shells most generally employed are those of the ordinary explosive kind and shrapnel. All shells are now provided with a driving band made of an alloy, as the supply of copper in Germany has become short.



POCKET SIGNAL CHART

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